

COUNCIL: 29 SEPTEMBER 2016

TRANSPORT, PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY

Cardiff Car Free Day

Cardiff's first 'Car Free Day' was held on Thursday 22nd September, when Cardiff's residents and visitors were encouraged to leave their cars at home and use alternative ways to travel into and out of Cardiff.

The event coincided with World Car Free Day which is held each year on 22nd September.

The event focused on Park Place, an important distributor road which is used by around 15,000 vehicles a day and is also a major bus route.

The closure of the street provided the opportunity to stage a Car Free Day Outdoor Sustainable Transport Exhibition in combination with a Street Party to celebrate Cardiff University Freshers Week.

Council officers worked closely with a large number of key partners over several months to plan for the event. We extend our thanks to all of the partners who took part in Car Free Day, including Cardiff University and Cardiff University Students' union, Nation Radio, bus companies and transport charities and social enterprises.

It was attended by 16 main exhibitors, Street Food vendors and entertainers and numerous Cardiff University Student Union societies and attracted large numbers of visitors throughout the day. Car Free Day received considerable coverage in local media including Nation Radio and ITV Wales as well as live updates throughout the day on Wales Online.

Park Place was closed to cars throughout Car Free Day, but special provision was made for access for people with disabilities and for users of Cardiff University's Crèche. The closure of Park Place was advertised through a formal Traffic Regulation Order, which had to be sealed to allow the closure to go ahead, and on Early Warning Signs and the Council's Variable Messaging System, to allow residents and commuters to prepare for the closure. We also worked closely with Nation Radio to promote the event through a campaign on this station.

The main objectives of this event were to spend one carefully planned day without cars, to study and observe the outcomes and to reflect and plan for the future of Car Free Day in Cardiff.

Media coverage of the event appears to have been largely positive. However, the Council is undertaking an internal review of the event which will involve

assessing the air quality data gathered, considering the impacts on traffic conditions on the day and feedback from exhibitors and stakeholders. We will publish further information once we have completed our work on this.

Moving forward, and recognising the calls that have come in response asking for a bigger event, we will carefully consider options for staging events of this kind in the future.

Questions and Answers

How much did it cost?

Car Free Day cost £20,000. This was used for radio marketing, holding the exhibition (e.g. providing the equipment for exhibitors) and implementing the road closure.

Why was only one street closed when more roads are regularly closed for sporting and other events?

Car Free Day 2016 was intended a 'pilot', to give the opportunity to observe and learn with the aim to grow for the future. Although only one road was closed for the event, Park Place is a key route into the city and for the major trip attractors of Cardiff University and the civic centre. Preparing for the closure and crucially, securing the support of the wide range of partners the Council worked with to hold this event, was vital in ensuring that the event ran successfully. The knowledge, experience and networks which have been developed will be invaluable for holding Car Free Days in future years. Events which require wider road closures (e.g. rugby internationals) often provide revenue for the Council because of the car parking/park and ride services which are required. This enables the road closures to be carried out at no, or little, cost to the local authority. This was not the case for Car Free Day, and the availability of funding for the event will be a factor in whether bigger – or more frequent – Car Free Days are held in the future.

Did it cause problems for drivers elsewhere in the city?

Early analysis has not revealed any wider problems on the city's network as a result of the closure.

Will more roads be closed next time?

We are considering options for holding more events of this kind in the future.

I didn't know the event was happening

Car Free Day was promoted widely through a campaign on Nation Radio, the Council's website and social media, exhibitor social media, websites and email marketing, press releases in local press and on Early Warning Signs and Variable Messaging Signs.

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Cabinet Member, Transport, Planning & Sustainability
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