

COUNCIL: 22 JULY 2021

CULTURE & LEISURE STATEMENT

Covid-19 Impact on Culture & Leisure

Covid-19 has continued to impact on large parts of my portfolio. Where possible, the Council is operating within the agreed capacity limits or legislative allowances of the venue to facilitate events and activities. St David's Hall, for example, although not able to open to the public, has facilitated a number of rehearsals and broadcast events including a series of Radio 3 live lunchtime concerts; Welsh National Opera rehearsals; National Youth Orchestra of Wales rehearsals; Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama rehearsals; recordings by the National Eisteddfod; recordings by the Cory Band; and, as reported last month, Cardiff Singer of the World.

The First Minister's announcement on 14 July 2021 provides us with positive opportunities to support the cautious reopening of the event sector as the limits on the numbers of people who can meet in public places or at events is removed. Event operators and outdoor premises now have greater flexibility in respect of social distancing subject to a Covid Risk Assessment.

The Council's Events Liaison Panel, the multi-agency event safety and security advisory panel, will be working closely with event promoters in the coming weeks to support them in facilitating Covid-safe events over the summer months. The capacity and format of each event will be informed by a detailed risk assessment that must demonstrate that the public health of those working at the event, the venue and patrons visiting the event remains paramount.

The Council is also planning for the phased reopening of our venues in September, again having cognisance of public safety considerations and ensuring that all reasonable protections are in place for customers and staff as we transition into a future with fewer Covid rules.

In the interim, I am grateful to all staff who continue to support the response to the pandemic and work with colleagues across the Council to support the city's recovery: whether through Test, Trace, Protect (TTP); Covid marshalling in the city centre; working with the grassroots music sector; or facilitating the delivery of the Summer of Smiles children's festival on City Hall Lawn.

Allotments

I wanted to take the opportunity to provide an update on some emerging projects and outreach work within our Allotment service.

At the Leckwith-Droves allotments site in Grangetown, in partnership with Welsh Veterans Partnership, a project to bring uncultivated allotment land back into use is gathering pace. The project will support and enable veterans and their families to integrate with the local allotment community through the growing of fruit and vegetables.

The Council has also been successful in securing grant funding of £20k via the Travis Perkins Legacy Fund linked to the regeneration of the Ely Great Farm and Cowbridge Road allotments sites in Caerau. This project will see uncultivated allotment land being brought back into use and infrastructure improvements being made, together with employment opportunities for young people through the UK Government's Kickstart Scheme.

At the Colchester Avenue allotments site, a project in partnership with Action for Children is in development that will see parents with children with learning difficulties cultivating produce on site and integrating with the local allotment community.

The Welsh Government has also confirmed funding of £59k under its Allotment Support Grant for priority fencing works at the Pontcanna A and Ely Great Farm allotments sites.

The support of local Site Associations has been critical in securing funding and progressing these projects, which clearly demonstrate the benefit of provision beyond mainstream cultivation.

In addition to the allotment-based projects, I can also advise that as part of the review of the Allotment Strategy, the Council will be commencing a consultation exercise with all of its allotment tenants next month. I am very aware of the impacts of Covid-19, the growing interest in allotment gardening and other factors that are influencing service provision and I want to ensure that the views and needs of tenants are fully taken into account.

Community Volunteering

Following suspension during the Covid-19 pandemic, officers from my portfolio area have been working closely with colleagues from the Health & Safety team in developing Covid-19 risk assessments that will ensure the safe re-introduction of community volunteering within our parks and green spaces. Volunteering on an individual and group basis recommenced earlier this month and I anticipate activity will increase in the coming months. The increasing community interest in our parks and green spaces, which has been very evident during the pandemic, has resulted many new 'Friends of' groups coming forward, which is great to see. Officers are supporting these new groups in working towards the transition to the adoption of a formal constitution.

Coed Caerdydd Project

Members will be aware of the Council's ambitions to increase the tree canopy across the city over time and, with this in mind, I am delighted to report that the Council has received formal confirmation from Welsh Government of a grant award of £795,000 under the Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being funding stream. This funding, which spans over three financial years, will support the delivery of the Council's Coed Caerdydd project and will enable the appointment of a Project Manager and Volunteer Co-ordinator to accelerate implementation of the project. Over late summer/early autumn 2021, the consultation process to inform future planting programmes will commence and I want to ensure that members' views on how we can achieve our aims are fully considered as part of this process.

Leisure Services

The Council's leisure partner, GLL, is reporting a better than anticipated return to leisure centres, with participation and income being slightly higher than forecast. The UK picture for GLL is similar with growth in memberships and high demand for children's swimming lessons. Our own in-house managed facilities, including Cardiff International White Water, Channel View and the Riding School, are also experiencing a strong return with high customer demand.

Outdoor Sport

Cardiff's local cricket leagues have adapted their formats for small cluster friendlies. Mini and junior football and rugby clubs have also been back in training and the majority of pitches have been kept in use throughout the summer, in particular to encourage children to keep playing sport. Senior football clubs commenced pre-season training across the city, with outdoor sport returning under government and National Governing Body guidance from 13 July 2021.

Cardiff Harbour Authority

I am pleased to report that Cardiff Harbour Authority successfully retained its ISO 14001 Environmental Management system accreditation following a very positive British Standards Institute (BSI) audit at the end of June 2021. ISO 14001 is the international standard for environmental management systems and demonstrates how an organisation manages its environmental risks and impacts, ensuring legal compliance.

Councillor Peter Bradbury
Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure
15 July 2021