

# Cardiff City Centre Recovery Action Plan

January 2022



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High Street

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# Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an extraordinary impact on city centres across the UK, changing the way we live our lives and the way we do business in ways few of us could have imagined. However, in many ways this has forced us to reflect on longer-term trends that were already occurring in retail activity, the use of technology, the demand for experiences and for high quality places. Moving forward, the key issue for city centres is whether they can adapt, transform and emerge stronger as great destinations that people want to come to.

Cardiff has already been on a process of successful change. Over the past 25 years, the city centre has seen some of the most transformational improvements in its history, from major leisure, retail and business developments, such as the Principality Stadium, St David's Dewi Sant and the regeneration of Central Square, through to the increased pedestrianisation of its streets making areas more inclusive/accessible, the growth of its residential population through city centre living and the emergence of the 24 hour city centre through the increased provision and diversity of its cultural and tourism offer. These improvements have added to other key features in the city centre, such as its outstanding Castle, Civic Centre and Victorian arcades, which all contribute towards its unique character.

Specifically for the city centre the aim is to build upon its existing achievements as a great destination.

As the city emerges from the pandemic it is essential that we consider the steps we need to take to accelerate recovery, whilst at the same time recognising that we need to use the crisis as a catalyst to building back greener, fairer and stronger.

In this regard, a key recognition is that in the future the most successful cities will have great city centres. This action plan outlines key initiatives and programmes that the Council and partners will work towards over the next five years to ensure Cardiff has a great City Centre. Cardiff has a strong tradition of working in partnership with private, voluntary and other public sector organisations and the initiatives/programmes will need the continuing active participation and collective buy in of all city centre users to achieve the highest standards in sustainable design, development, management, maintenance and marketing.

This plan we hope will make a great and vibrant city centre even greater.



CYNGHORYDD / COUNCILLOR HUW THOMAS

ARWEINYDD / LEADER

CYNGOR CAERDYDD / CARDIFF COUNCIL



# KEY TRENDS SHAPING CARDIFF CITY'S RENEWAL



## SUCCESSFUL CITY CENTRES ARE GREAT DESTINATIONS

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City centres and high streets must be destination experiences and places of choice; we no longer have to be there, but we must want to. Agglomeration, innovation and creativity will continue to drive economic growth and jobs. As Wales' core city, Cardiff will continue to play a leadership role in the Welsh economy post-Covid.



## NEW WORK/LIFE BALANCE

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Hybrid agile working is here to stay and combining home and office is likely to continue post-pandemic. Flexible space and travel will provide opportunities for local economic renewal, reduced carbon emissions, reduce congestion and cleaner air that need to be grasped.



## THE LOCAL - REDISCOVERED

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Lockdowns have led to a greater appreciation of local areas and demand for local services. The city centre must work in tandem with '15-minute neighbourhoods', where people have easy and safe access to shops, schools, health care and green/blue spaces in the vicinity of their homes.



## FUNDAMENTAL PUBLIC EQUALITY

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Without concerted action, the gap between rich and poor will widen. The poorest communities have faced a double impact of health and financial hardship as a result of the pandemic. City centres need to engage and welcome the whole community, of all ages and abilities.



## CURATION & PARTNERSHIP

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Taking management to a new level. City centres are now about quality not quantity. Healthy, green, clean, vibrant, well designed and safe environments that reach highest standards cannot be created without careful planning and organisation and will be critical to success.



## EVENTS & OUTSIDE SPACE

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Hospitality and the use of social spaces are bouncing back as lockdown eases. The role of food and drink, together with arts, culture, animation, events and the use of public spaces will be integral to creating experiences that bring people back together.



## CLIMATE EMERGENCY

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Notwithstanding the depth of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is recognised that Climate Change remains the defining global challenge of our generation. The continuing development and regeneration of the city centre provides opportunities to make it more resilient to climate change and to contribute towards becoming a carbon neutral city.



## ACTIVE TRAVEL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

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City centres will reassert the role of the pedestrian and cycling environment. Car access will still be critical, but car domination will need to be tamed or pushed out of important spaces. Effective mass transit and active travel networks are the key to avoid moving from lockdown to gridlock.



# OTHER UK EXEMPLARS

Cities around the UK are looking to radically transform their buildings and spaces into vibrant environmental, social and economic hubs of prosperity.

## *Liverpool*

Liverpool is a place that has seen much change over the last 20 years. Culture Liverpool was established after the triumph of 2008, in which the City of Liverpool delivered the most successful European Capital of Culture year to date.

More than £4 billion was invested in the physical transformation of the city. Areas were reconverted and brought back to life to reach their full potential with the creation of developments including Liverpool ONE, the Echo Arena and Convention Centre and the opening of the cruise liner terminal and renovations to places like St George's Hall, the Bluecoat and World Museum Liverpool.

## *Nottingham*

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust has shared a bold vision to rewild the city of Nottingham and 'green up' the historic city centre following the decision to demolish the much-derided Broadmarsh shopping centre. With 100% of the demolished site transformed into a natural urban oasis, would become Nottingham's living breathing heartbeat – a mini Central Park where people can connect with nature and escape the stresses of modern life without leaving the city.

Such a bold green vision could set the city on a course to a greener economic recovery, boost tourism and stimulate inward investment.



‘Liverpool is a shining symbol of renaissance, boasting modern architecture, an abundance of art, and a people proud of both its past and present...’

**Manchester Evening News**

### *Manchester*

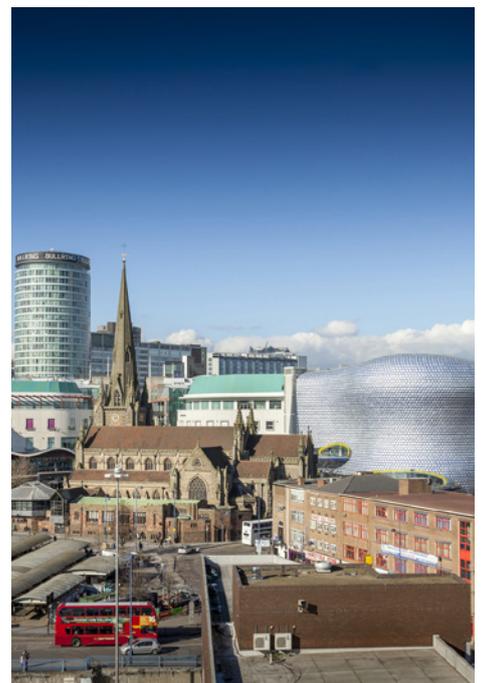
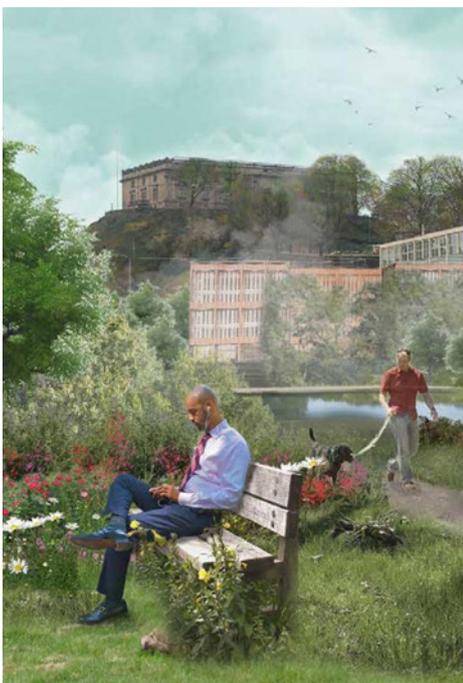
The Northern Powerhouse forms part of the government’s industrial strategy which is building on a strong economy and helping businesses up and down the country seize the opportunities presented by leaving the EU.

The Northern Powerhouse strategy explains how the government will work with local stakeholders to address key barriers to productivity in the region. The government will invest in transport infrastructure to improve connections between and within the North’s towns, cities and counties; work with local areas to raise education and skills levels across the North; ensure the North is an excellent place to start and grow a business; and ensure the Northern Powerhouse is recognised worldwide as an excellent opportunity for trade and investment.

### *Birmingham*

In response to the challenges facing Birmingham City Centre including the need to tackle climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic as well as economic challenges. The city has proposed four principles that will guide the actions and plans in the strategy for Central Birmingham 2040.

- Green city - create a city environment that has a minimal impact on our planet and enables nature to be truly part of the city.
- Equitable city - a city where all communities have the same opportunities.
- Liveable city - a people-focussed city where citizens can create homes and communities.
- Distinctive city - a city that takes pride in the individual identity of its communities.

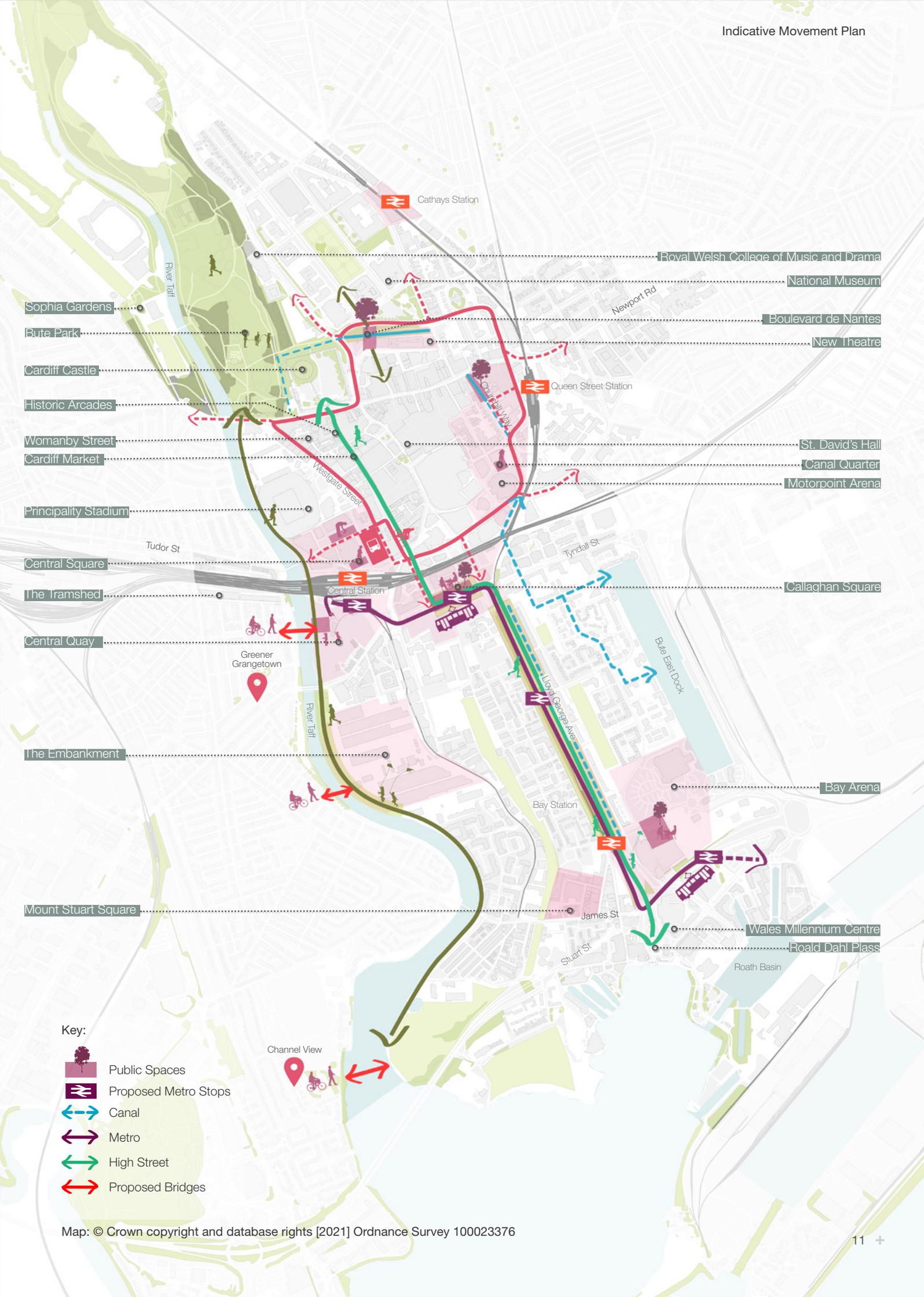


A low-angle photograph of a stone building tower, likely a clock tower, with a lion statue in the foreground. The tower is made of light-colored stone and features a clock face and several arched windows. The lion statue is grey and appears to be part of a wall. The background shows green trees and a clear blue sky.

# CREATING A GREAT CAPITAL CITY CENTRE

## A FIVE-YEAR COMMITMENT:

To deliver a city centre that is safe, clean, green, prosperous, attractive, well maintained and a great Capital City Centre for all visitors, businesses and residents of the diverse Cardiff community



- ..... Sophia Gardens
- ..... Bute Park
- ..... Cardiff Castle
- ..... Historic Arcades
- ..... Womanby Street
- ..... Cardiff Market
- ..... Principality Stadium
- ..... Central Square
- ..... The Tramshed
- ..... Central Quay
- ..... The Embankment
- ..... Mount Stuart Square
- ..... Cathays Station
- ..... Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
- ..... National Museum
- ..... Boulevard de Nantes
- ..... New Theatre
- ..... Queen Street Station
- ..... St. David's Hall
- ..... Canal Quarter
- ..... Motorpoint Arena
- ..... Callaghan Square
- ..... Bay Arena
- ..... Wales Millennium Centre
- ..... Roald Dahl Plass

- Key:**
-  Public Spaces
  -  Proposed Metro Stops
  -  Canal
  -  Metro
  -  High Street
  -  Proposed Bridges



# 1. A CURATED CITY CENTRE THAT'S SAFE, CLEAN, GREEN ATTRACTIVE AND WELL-MANAGED

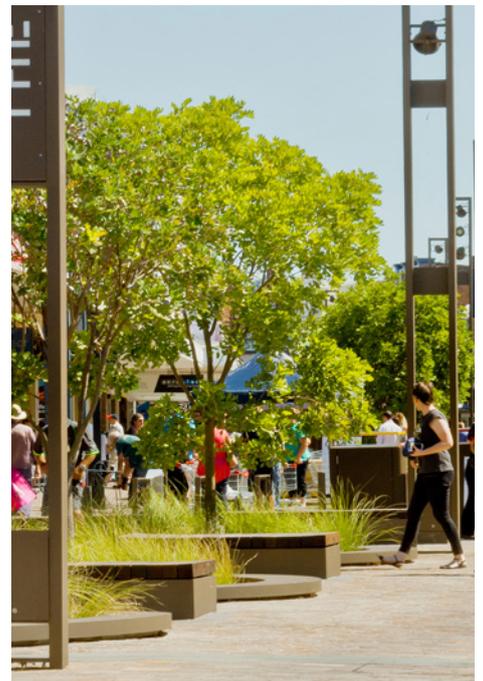
Creating a destination city centre with a consistent level of high-quality experience for all user groups will not happen by itself. It will need proactive governance, partnerships and management.

Cardiff already has a well-managed centre, however by bringing together key partners, priorities and resources in a clear vision it can go further. The city centre will need to move from being managed to fully curated, where we collaboratively design it, implement it, maintain it and keep improving its quality and the experience for all users.



WE WILL:

1. Establish effective curation/management resources. Take a more direct role in proactively managing and coordinating the future of the city centre to reflect the needs of residents, workers, businesses and visitors.
2. Establish effective partnerships with the Business Improvement District and key partners including residents.
3. Make the city centre clean, safe, green and well maintained a core priority.
4. Develop a clear five-year plan and vision for the city centre to coordinate:
  - Public, open and green spaces,
  - Events, markets and street animation into a year-round programme,
  - City centre marketing and branding,
  - All licensing regimes.
5. Create an integrated city centre funding programme to support the key actions in this plan.
6. Work with community safety partners to make the city centre feel safer for families, women and visitors.
7. Establish high quality design standards for shop frontages, public spaces, street furniture and all aspects of the environment.





## 2. A DYNAMIC BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT HUB

The role of the traditional office is changing, with demand becoming focused on more specialist and higher value activities, notably those where collaboration in itself is a driver of productivity. Demand is also increasing for some people to get back to the office, especially from younger workers for whom the learning and social aspects of work is something they value.

We are also seeing a change in retail patterns and where the chain stores have left, independents are taking their place. This adds to the attractiveness of the city centre, where the local, authentic and unique attracts an audience for whom high street retail names can be found elsewhere.

A successful city centre needs to support these businesses, providing the offices, shops and meeting spaces that will attract economic activity.

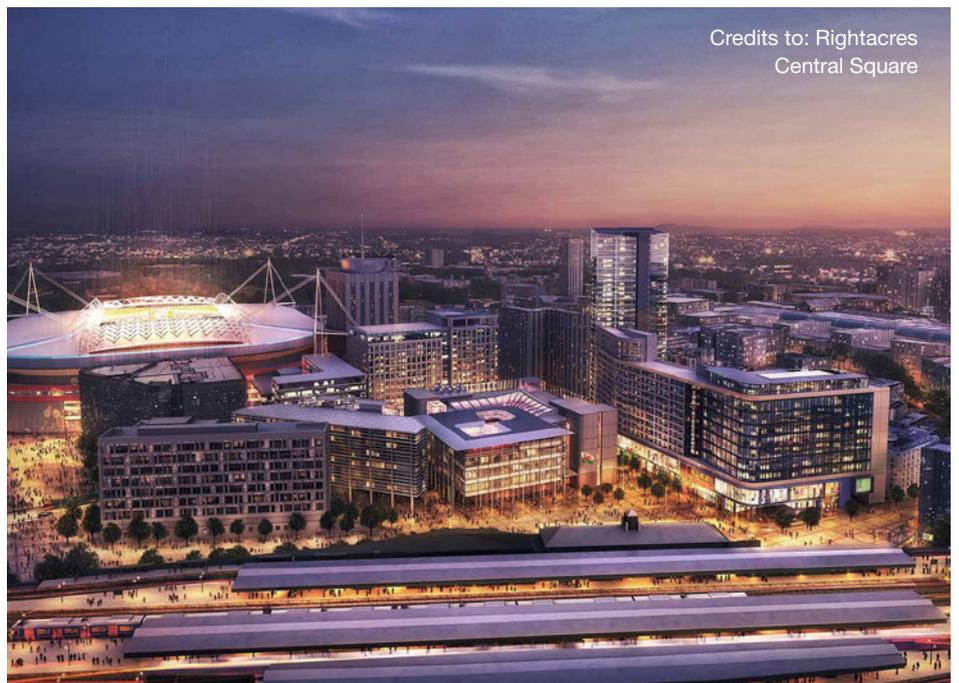


WE WILL:

1. Create a world class destination business city centre, with a selection of high quality, sustainable, innovative and flexible office and co-working spaces that attract and grow knowledge-based businesses.
2. Develop proposals for meanwhile uses and incubation spaces, providing a dynamic approach to ensuring that empty units, retail and office spaces are used productively.
3. Support the development of more flexible and low-cost space to help indigenous and independent businesses grow and become more productive.
4. Develop a 'smart city' digital infrastructure programme.
5. Develop a business events strategy that showcases the city's competitiveness and establishes a programme of activity.
6. Seek to expand the city centre's designation to be better integrated with Cardiff Bay and key locations such as Tudor Street, James Street and Newport Road.
7. Develop proposals for and complete major developments in the 'Central Business District' (CBD), including at:
  - Central Square
  - Central Quay
  - Callaghan Square
  - The Canal Quarter
  - Cardiff Bay



Credits to: Rightacres  
Central Quay



Credits to: Rightacres  
Central Square



# 3. A WORLD CLASS TRANSPORT NETWORK

Key actions have already been taken to transform city transport connectivity with the new Transport Interchange and Active Travel network. Nonetheless, to achieve the city’s Transport Strategy targets, much more needs to be done to establish the city centre at the hub of a sustainable public transport mass transit, active travel and highway network including a renewed Metro Central Station. This delivery of major infrastructure will make the city centre an attractive and more convenient place that encourages use from people of all ages and abilities and underpins economic transformation.

People should be provided with a welcoming sense of arrival. They should enter high quality streets and public spaces, be able to connect seamlessly with onward journeys and have the means to navigate their way through the city centre using well located signage, wayfinding and digital information.



WE WILL:

1. Work with partners to complete the Central Square Transport Interchange and upgrade the Cardiff Central (Metro Central), Queens Street and Cathays railway stations, delivering high quality accessible 'gateway' entrances into the city centre.
2. Deliver plans for a new Metro tram link between the city centre and Cardiff Bay, including the provision of new station facilities at Cardiff Central and Pierhead Street, as the first phase of the development of Cardiff Crossrail. Phase 2 will then continue to Newport Road and Roath Basin.
3. Create an enlarged 'clean air' pedestrian and active travel core to the city centre to be developed alongside the new transport interchange delivery.
4. Connect the city centre with high quality segregated cycle and bus networks. Develop new 'bus hubs' in key locations at Greyfriars Road, Churchill Way and Pierhead Street.
5. Integrate high quality visitor services and tourist information into new transport facilities, including the Transport Interchange and Metro Central.
6. Develop a new city centre taxi/loading/parking masterplan.
7. Open up access to and the use of the River Taff as a transport corridor, including developing proposals for three new walking/cycling bridge crossings at Central Quay, The Embankment and Channel View to improve integration with nearby residential areas.
8. Make Cardiff an exemplar for zero carbon transport including electric vehicle (EV) charging and EV public transport throughout the city centre.



Credits to: Math Roberts  
Senghenydd Road cycle lane



Credits to: Visit Wales  
Bute Park



# 4. A CITY CENTRE OF WORLD CLASS URBAN DESIGN & PUBLIC REALM

The city centre already has some great streets and spaces that provide the setting for a wide range of high quality historic and modern buildings, from the Civic Centre in the north, through to Cardiff Bay's waterfront, the Pierhead Building and the Wales Millennium Centre in the south. However, there are opportunities to go beyond this and develop a network of new (and upgraded existing) streets, arcades and squares fit for an expanding and diverse capital city.

We need to add to our existing achievements and continue to raise design standards, in order to provide more landmark streets, spaces, buildings and destinations, based around a continuous pedestrian network that attracts national and international attention and supports local businesses.



WE WILL:

1. Prepare a streetscape design guide for the city centre, consolidating and updating existing guidance to ensure that new and existing streets, spaces and buildings are developed to high quality architecture, landscape and biodiversity standards.
2. Develop a programme of streetscape enhancements to upgrade and declutter, creating streets and spaces that are safer, more attractive and more accessible for all users.
3. Encourage commercial premises to upgrade building/shop frontages and to raise design standards, focusing on historic buildings and Conservation Areas (e.g. Castle Street frontages).
4. Regenerate Cardiff Market as a great destination linked to the network of historic arcades.
5. Create a new Capital City High Street with an enhanced public realm, including greening, art, wayfinding and amenity spaces, following the historic central 'spine' from Cardiff Castle, through High Street/St Mary Street, Callaghan Square and Lloyd George Avenue, terminating at Cardiff Bay and the Docks.
6. Develop proposals for new landmark squares and public spaces at the Canal Quarter, Callaghan Square, Central Quay, University/ Cultural Quarter, The Embankment, Mount Stuart Square, Boulevard de Nantes and Westgate Street.





# 5. A GREEN AND BIODIVERSE CITY CENTRE

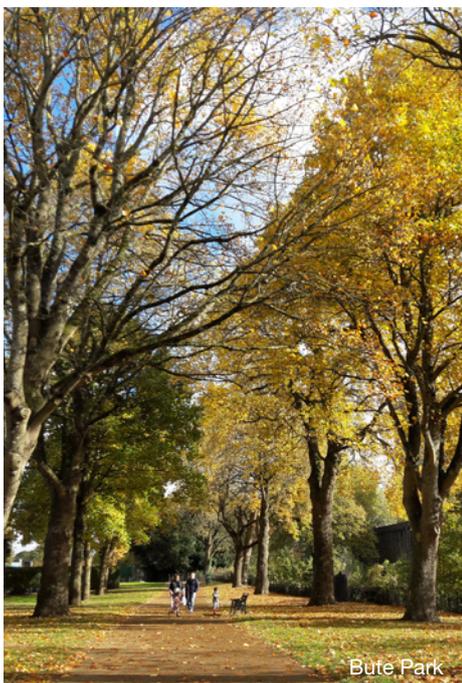
The city centre has a rich heritage of green infrastructure that forms an integral part of its character, from the 130 acres of landscaped gardens and parkland in Bute Park, through to the magnificent tree lined avenues and green spaces that form the setting of the Civic Centre. These areas are however separated from the core of the city centre by busy transport corridors and there are several locations within the central core that, by comparison, are lacking in trees and greenery.

Urban greening has a wide range of positive benefits, from helping to lessen the impacts of climate change by cooling the city and absorbing storm water, to improving biodiversity and ecological resilience by creating better quality and connected habitats, through to promoting healthier living by providing spaces for physical activity/relaxation and making streets more welcoming and attractive.



WE WILL:

1. Better integrate existing major parks (Bute Park/Cathays Park) and green spaces with the core of the city centre through traffic calming measures and improved pedestrian connectivity, including through the Castle grounds and its west/ clock tower gate.
2. Seek to keep the Castle grounds open as a public green space.
3. Develop a green asset plan and work with partners to fully green the city centre (contributing towards Coed Caerdydd) through large scale interventions such as street greening, increased tree planting and the installation of green roofs/ walls on new/redeveloped buildings, through to smaller scale works such as the inclusion of planters in all street cafés.
4. Work with partners and developers to deliver a network of new public green spaces across the city centre, including developing major new parks at: Callaghan Square, Lloyd George Avenue and the Taff River Embankment.
5. Turn grey areas of impermeable paving green (and blue) through the increased provision of rain gardens/sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDs) as part of a comprehensive programme of retrofitting across the city centre. Develop new landmark schemes like the award winning Greener Grangetown in the city centre, Riverside and Cathays.





# 6. A BLUE CITY CENTRE OF RIVERS AND CANALS

Cardiff is a city that owes much of its success and growth to its canals, rivers and waterfront location, however, over the years, many of these features have become underutilised, been built over or hidden from view.

Massive potential exists to open up, enhance and link up the city centres water ways and water frontages, with new canals, bridges and active travel/tourism routes that link to wider community, economic, environmental and biodiversity benefits, helping to improve people's health and wellbeing.



WE WILL:

1. Create tourism/visitor active travel trails along and around Cardiff Bay, the rivers Taff, Rhymney and Ely, Cardiff Lakes (Roath Lake and Llanishen/Lisvane Reservoirs), the Dock Feeder Canal and the Coastal Path.
2. Work with partners and developers to deliver a network of new public waterfront corridors across the city centre, including developing major new water parks at:
  - The Canal Quarter (along Churchill Way)
  - Lloyd George Avenue (returning the Bute Dock West Canal)
3. Create new river bridges at: Channel View, The Embankment (Dumballs Road), Central Quay and Ely Mill. Deliver a new multimode road bridge at Llanrumney (Ball Road). Refurbish Black Weir Bridge.
4. Explore the opportunity to create 'continental style' waterfront open spaces at Cardiff Bay, Channel View and Black Weir Bridge.
5. Develop a 10-year river, water and flood plan for the city centre to help ensure that it is resilient to flood risk and also maximises access to the great existing and new water opportunities across the city.



Blackweir Bridge



Canal Quarter, Churchill Way



# 7. A GREAT INCLUSIVE PLACE TO LIVE AND PLAY

The growth in city centre living over the past two decades has been predominantly through the introduction of new apartment buildings and the conversion of the upper floors above commercial premises. To help to make living in the city centre more accessible to families and a broader range of people, there is a need to provide a wider mix of housing types and more flexible accommodation.

Creating great places to live that are vibrant and viable, with highly legible neighbourhoods, accessible facilities, a mixture of housing choices and bespoke architecture will be central to attracting more people to live in the city centre. In addition, Cardiff has committed to becoming a ‘Child Friendly City’. The surrounding public realm should support all ages of the population through the provision of safe, high-quality streets and public spaces that prioritise pedestrians.



WE WILL:

1. Seek to provide a wider range and choice of family accommodation across the city centre/Bay with supporting facilities.
2. Establish a regular engagement partnership with residents and user groups.
3. Commit to making the city centre safer, cleaner, welcoming and more attractive for people of all ages and backgrounds.
4. Develop an equalities and all ages access strategy, supporting the city's Age Friendly City strategy.
5. Work with the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns programme to support in city centre regeneration schemes, street frontage improvements and public space enhancements.
6. Develop a fully child friendly city centre including the provision of play opportunities in new public spaces.
7. Create great food destinations, with high quality street markets, restaurants, cafes, shops and supporting infrastructure.
8. Develop a range of quieter seating areas and family/play spaces.



Credits to: Visit Wales





# 8. A CITY CENTRE OF CULTURE AND ANIMATION

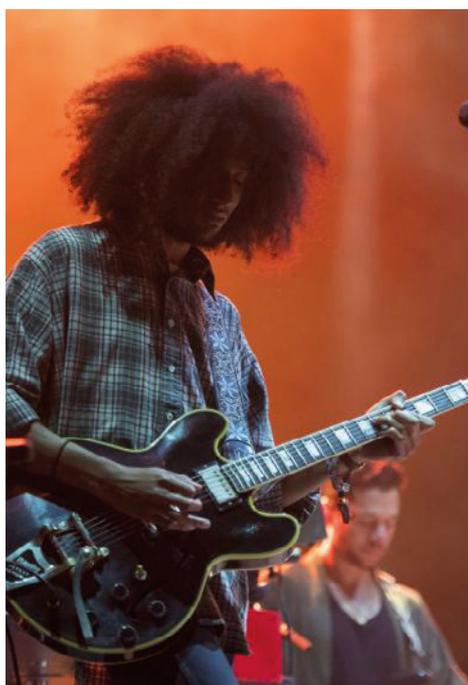
Cardiff can build on its status as the national centre for arts and performance, utilising the full potential of cultural venues, including the Wales Millennium Centre, the National Museum and Gallery of Wales, St David's Hall and the New Theatre. Building on established events, Cardiff's position can be reinforced as a major cultural centre. The city's festivals are of national renown. Cardiff is the regional hub for the provision of around-the-clock entertainment, arts and leisure facilities. Many of the city's pubs and clubs provide live music events while larger venues throughout the city centre play host to internationally recognised artists.

It is essential to put culture and arts at the centre of the recovery, embracing the role the sector plays in shaping our city centre.



WE WILL:

1. Develop a new 'home grown' events strategy and place animation programme.
2. Develop proposals for a new creative hub in the city centre to support production and performance.
3. Develop new city centre and Bay art/cultural centres.
4. Establish a city cultural festival, scoping a quality International Festival of Street Art.
5. Develop Womanby Street as a new music quarter to celebrate its significance as Cardiff's most loved music street.
6. Establish a city centre artist in residence programme.
7. Develop creative uses in meanwhile spaces, taking a dynamic approach to repurposing empty shops for artist activity where possible to ensure that empty spaces are used productively.
8. Establish public spaces that can accommodate outdoor events as part of new developments.





# 9. A GREAT QUALITY EXPERIENCE FOR VISITORS

The bustling city centre is a key destination for tourism in Wales and the sector is a critical part of the city's post-Covid recovery. The area boasts the majority of the larger events and attractions in Cardiff, including Cardiff Castle, the Principality Stadium and Bute Park and accommodates the majority of hotel bedrooms and larger spaces to attract conferences and business events.

The aim is to raise the profile of Cardiff, increase visitor numbers, and encourage repeat visits and longer stays. We will do this by working collaboratively with key stakeholders and delivering marketing campaigns that promote the tourism product to both domestic and international audiences.



WE WILL:

1. Establish a clear 'Visit Cardiff' brand, bringing together key stakeholders such as FOR Cardiff and Visit Cardiff Network members, to ensure there is a cohesive approach to marketing and promotion through one place brand for the city.
2. Explore the potential of a transport and attractions visitor card.
3. Promote free access activities within the city centre such as public art and heritage trails.
4. Progress key campaigns to help raise the profile of the city including Christmas, a waterfront city, major events and the Cardiff Music City brand.
5. Promote the city centre's unique assets including Cardiff Castle, Cardiff Market, its Victorian arcades and sports/cultural venues.
6. Build on visitcardiff.com and associated social media platforms to expand digital reach.
7. Encourage more business events of all sizes in the city centre to attract more weekday visitors and promote the city centre as a competitive business location.



