



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

Covid-19

Cardiff Council

City Centre Recovery – Castle Quarter

Cardiff Council has delivered an innovative new public space and outdoor seating area, the ‘Castle Quarter,’ to support local hospitality businesses in the city centre and allow residents to socialise safely during the recovery period.

Context

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on Cardiff’s economy. The UK and Welsh Government lockdowns required the vast majority of businesses, particularly in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, to shut down temporarily. The Council had already been preparing city centre interventions to improve air quality, so with Covid-19, it saw an opportunity to integrate its ambitions for better air quality and more active travel with the need to support local businesses in the recovery period. With extensive experience of hosting large-scale events and the temporary measures required in the city centre to support them, the Council was able to draw on existing knowledge and expertise to deliver infrastructure and associated measures in a very short timescale.

Development

To respond to the pressing situation for local city centre businesses and jobs, Cardiff Council collaborated with city partners to design and deliver the Castle Quarter, an innovative new public space in front of Cardiff Castle, in the heart of the city. The Castle Quarter consists of a 240-seat, outdoor covered eating area, allowing restaurants and cafés to trade while social distancing regulations remain too restrictive for a sufficient level of activity on their own premises. The Council closed Castle Street to traffic, allowing the new space to be built directly on the street, which has ensured the city centre remains an exciting, social and safe environment for residents and visitors, as well as a welcoming environment for pedestrians and cyclists, with new pop-up cycleways installed along the street. Stakeholder engagement played an essential role in the successful delivery of the project. The Council enlisted the support of Arup to design the Castle Quarter space and worked with FOR Cardiff – the city’s business improvement district – to engage businesses and assess their needs, ensuring that the scheme would be implemented in a way that would maximise the benefit to the local economy. Existing expertise within the Council was utilised to develop and deliver the



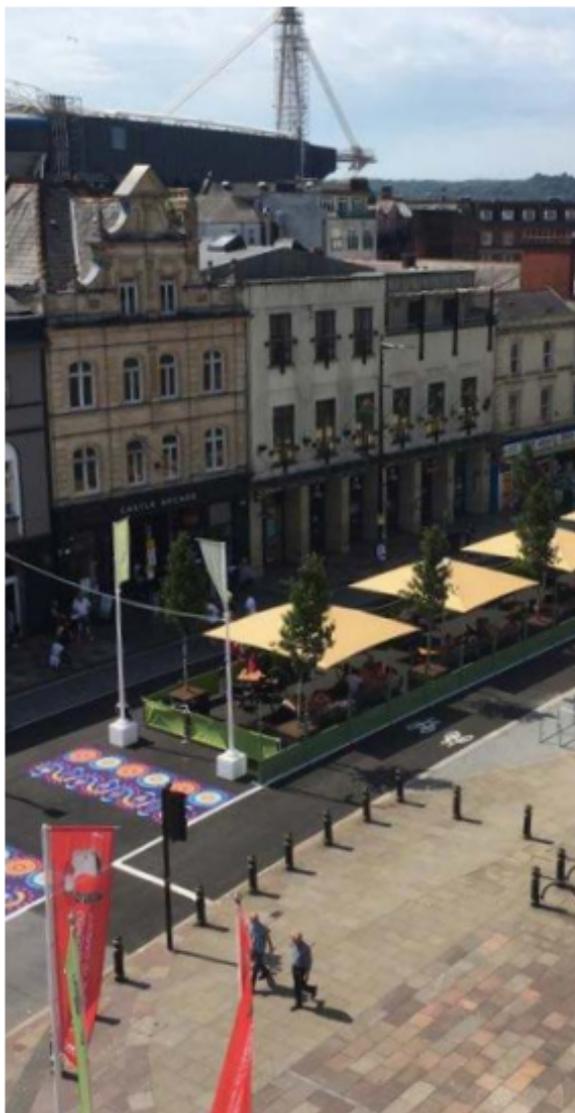
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supporting infrastructure, such as the pop-up cycleway. Placemaking and people-friendly public spaces were embedded from the initial planning stages with Arup, as there was a mutual recognition that the city had been given an opportunity to alter the path of the centre's development in favour of people and the environment.

Implementation

Castle Street was closed to traffic to allow the new outdoor seating area to be built on the street and Castle moat for use by local restaurants and cafés. Cardiff-based start-up Yoello was also hired to develop a new app, accessible by scanning a QR code placed on the tables, which allows customers to order deliveries from a number of restaurants and cafés across the city and to pay through a secure platform, ensuring that socially distancing is observed as much as possible. The Council and FOR Cardiff conducted a number of engagement sessions and workshops, as part of a commitment to support the operation of the city centre. Co-operative values and principles were embedded in this activity by working with local companies such as Yoello and employee owned organisations such as Arup, the Council was able to maximise the social value of the contract, ensuring better local social and economic outcomes.



The Castle Quarter, Cardiff

Review

After a highly successful first weekend, when the Castle Quarter generated over £80,000 for the local economy, many more city centre businesses are now in talks with the Council to join the initiative. The Castle Quarter project's success has been the result of strong collaboration between the Council, the private sector and the third sector, exemplifying the co-operative way of working. One of the major lessons the Council has learned from this activity, as well as the Covid-19 crisis more broadly, has been the positive impact a cleaner and less-congested environment has on the city. Furthermore, the link between delivering major benefits in air quality and also in terms of the economy, health and wellbeing has become even clearer. After a highly successful project integrating these components, the Council is looking for ways to maintain the significant progress made in its effort to build a greener, fairer and more people-focused city in the post-Covid era.

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