



The City We Have & **The City We Want**

Consultation Findings

November 2025 | Cavendish



2025 marks 70 years since Cardiff was declared the capital of Wales.

Since then, devolution has brought decision-making closer to the Welsh people, and technological and social revolutions have rewritten the way we use our city centres. The development of a world-class stadium in the heart of the city has seen acts from Taylor Swift to The Rolling Stones perform to an audience of millions, while Cardiff Castle and our iconic arcades look much the same now as they did then. Like all cities, Cardiff is a mixture of constancy and innovation.

FOR Cardiff itself is also closing in on 10 years in operation. I have been with the organisation since its inception and time really has flown. I am enormously proud of what the team have delivered over that period, from our much-celebrated City of Arcades campaign to important ongoing operational work such as additional street cleansing. I know that the work FOR Cardiff do has made a real difference to the city. The team, the board and I are consistently grateful to the businesses that endorse us – their ongoing input is delivering real change for the city centre.

These milestones provide an important moment to reflect on successes but also to be bold in imagining the future. That's why we commissioned this research to understand what the communities of Cardiff – both residents and businesses – really think about the city and its future. The best cities are co-produced by the public, government, and local business and we want to make sure everyone is involved in that process. My main takeaway from the findings of this research is the mixture of pride in our city and hope for the future that shines through in these results – people's love for our city really is inspiring to see.

Thank you to every individual and business that took the time to respond to our questions about Cardiff. We've learnt much from this survey that FOR Cardiff can now put into action to make Cardiff a better place in the future. There are some suggestions outside of our remit to deliver, but things that we too would definitely love to see as part of the city's future. Here's to the next 70 years!

Carolyn Brownell
Executive Director

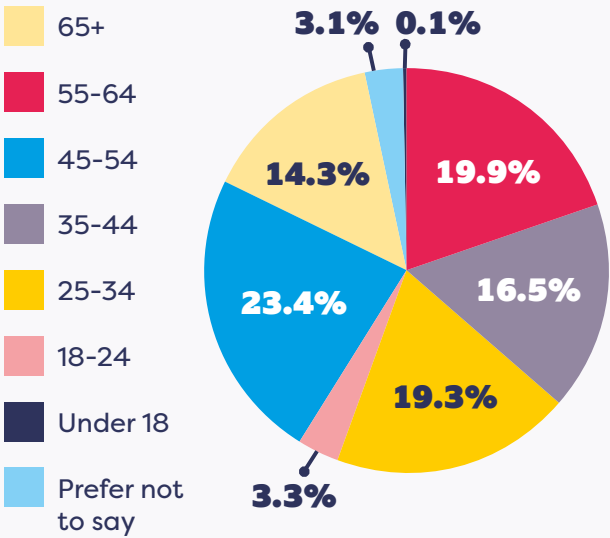


Methodology

The research was delivered through an open public survey, launched on August 25th 2025 and closed on October 10th 2025. 927 respondents participated in the survey: a mix of business representatives and individuals working or living in Cardiff.

The survey link was accessible online via FOR Cardiff's website and was promoted through social media channels, partner business organisations, and targeted social media ads to ensure responses from a broad range of demographics. The survey included a mix of closed and open-ended questions, allowing for both quantitative analysis and qualitative insights. No personal data that would identify respondents was taken. The responses were analysed using a combination of statistical methods and thematic analysis, ensuring that both the breadth and depth of public and business community opinion were captured.

Respondents by Age



Business Respondents by Sector



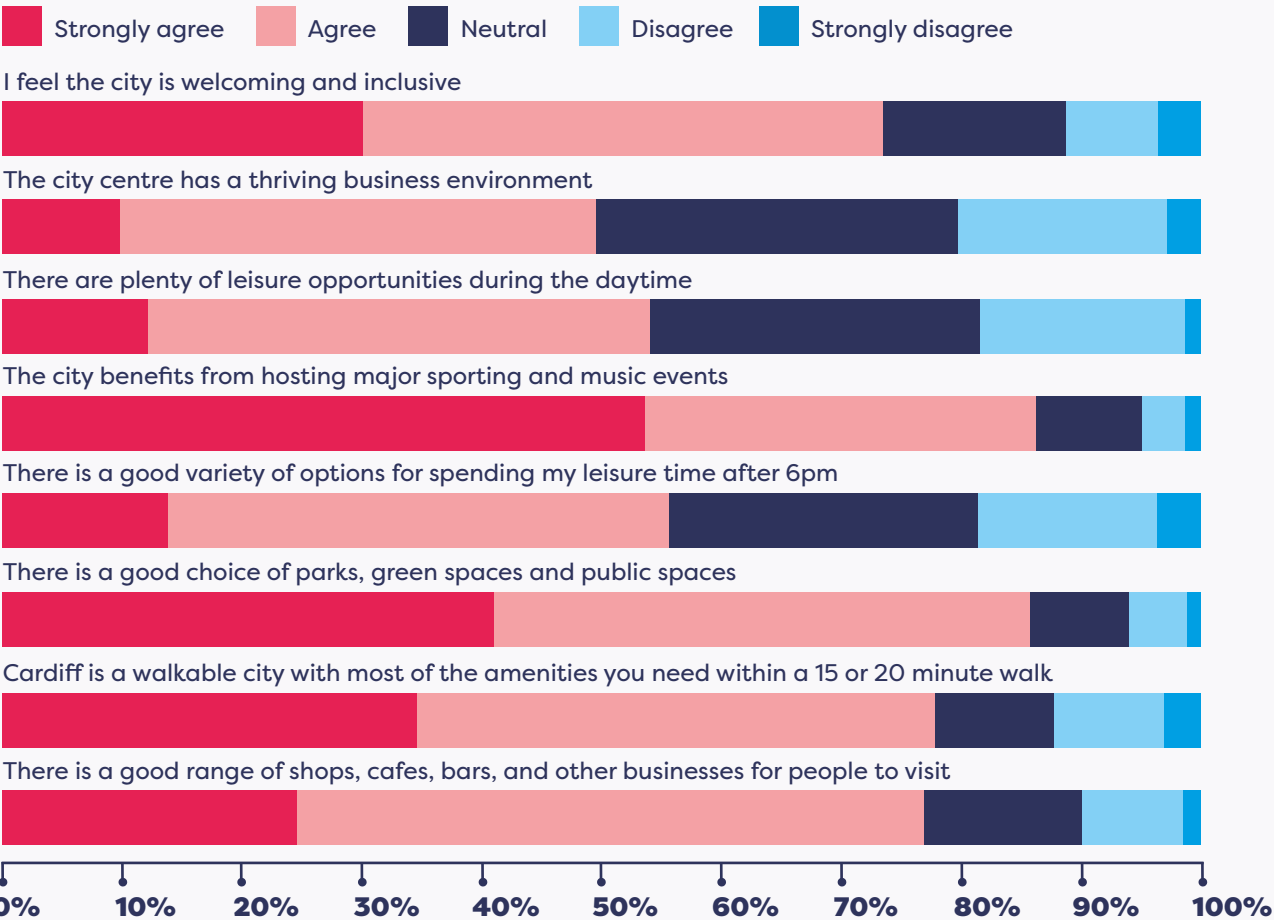
Of the people who responded to our survey, 29% were born in Cardiff. 27% came to Cardiff because of work opportunities, 17% came to study here and then stayed, and 15% told us that they live in Cardiff due to family reasons.

Other common reasons for people living in Cardiff included better affordability than other cities like London or Bristol, preferring the city's compact size and walkability, proximity to beaches and countryside and the variety, vibrant atmosphere, and cultural scene that Cardiff offers.

Civic pride

and what people really think of their Capital City...

74% felt that the city was welcoming and inclusive and 85% believe it has a good choice of parks and public spaces. Additionally, 86% think that Cardiff benefits from hosting major sporting and music events and 77% said that the city has a good range of shops, cafes, bars, and other businesses for people to visit, but only 50% felt that the city centre has a thriving business environment.



20% of respondents thought Cardiff is very clean, compared to other cities, while 2% thought it was dirtier. A third of people thought it had a similar level of cleanliness to other cities they'd visited across the UK.

We asked what three words immediately spring to mind when you think about Cardiff?

When they thought about the city centre, both the responses from the business community and individuals highlighted a city that is seen as both vibrant but also facing challenges.

Overall, the responses paint a picture of Cardiff as a dynamic, welcoming place with a rich heritage, reflecting a lively urban environment with strong cultural and historic associations.

Words such as busy, friendly, welcoming and vibrant dominate, with many people pointing to the city's rich heritage by citing the castle, the Victorian and Edwardian arcades and culture.

However, words such as dirty, litter, unsafe, tired, and empty also appear frequently, pointing to concerns about social issues and the appearance of the city. Many stated they would like to see 'grimy' pavements and litter cleaned up and run down buildings restored.

Additionally, some respondents mentioned that the city centre was uninviting at the weekends because of all the bars, while many praised the variety of bars, restaurants and pubs and the warm atmosphere.

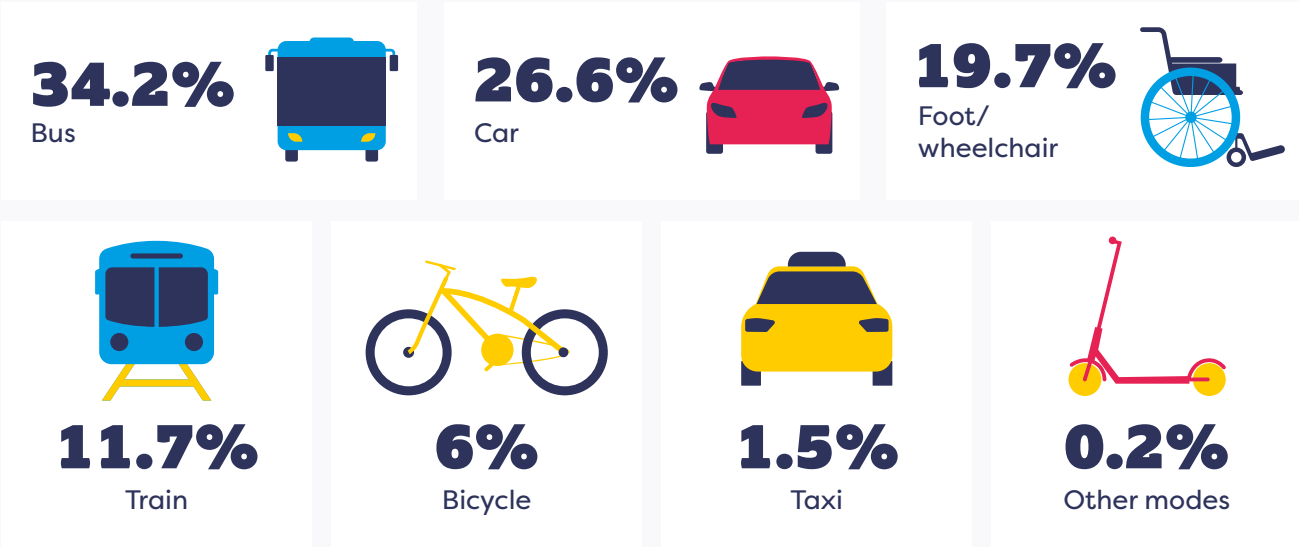


Getting in and around the city

Respondents told us that taking the bus was their top method of travelling in and around the city centre.

Just over a quarter said they were most likely to drive into Cardiff. Nearly 1 in 5 said they were most likely to travel into Cardiff on foot or by wheelchair. Only 6% were likely to cycle in and around the city as their preferred method of travel.

Preferred method of travel

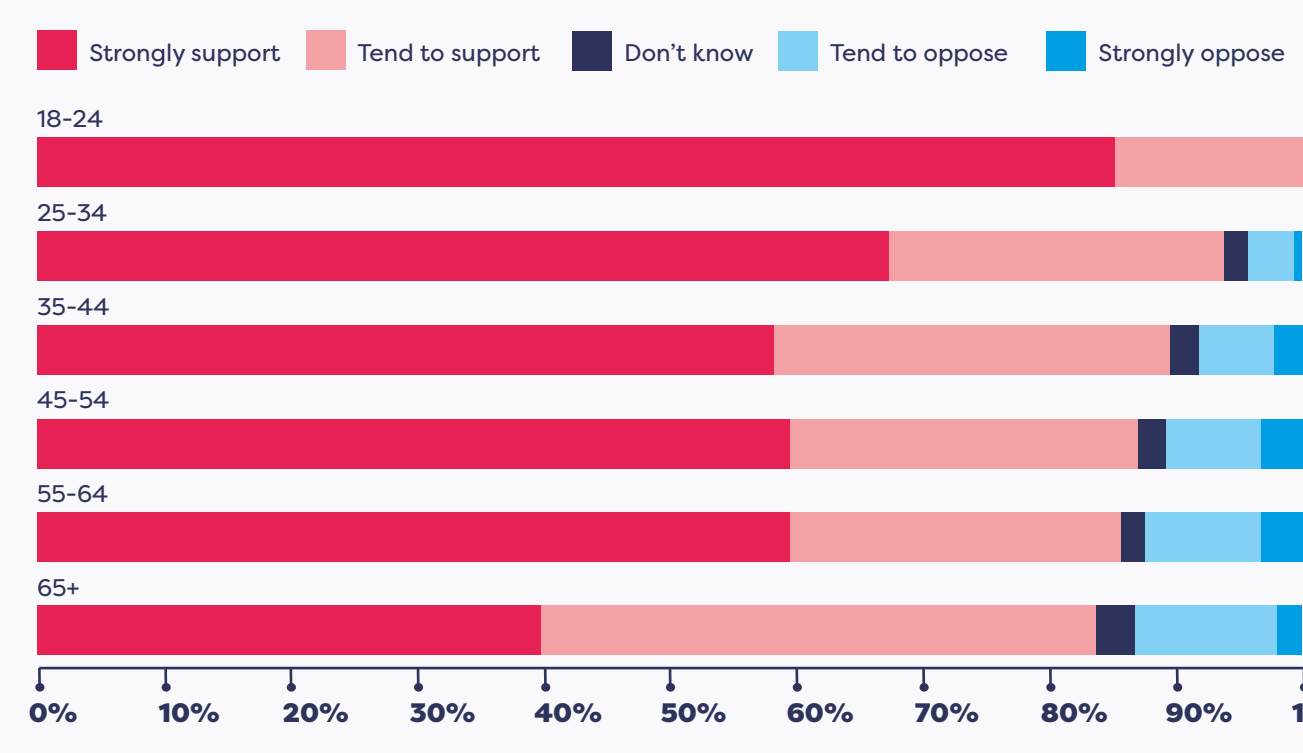


When asked what would make travelling into and around the city centre easier, people said:

Public Transport	More frequent, reliable, and affordable buses/trains; later services; integrated ticketing; better coverage
Roads & Parking	Cheaper/more parking; improved traffic flow; better event management; more park & ride
Infrastructure	Tram/metro system; clearer signage/maps; better information
Accessibility	Improved disabled access; accessible parking and stops; mobility hire options
Cycling & Walking	More/better cycle lanes; secure bike storage; improved pavements; safer crossings; enforcement of rules

Major events and promoting the capital city...

There have been moves over recent years to make Cardiff a premier visitor destination, with festivals, major sporting events and concerts, for example. We asked how supportive people were of this continuing.



Under 35s were hugely supportive of moves to stage more major sporting and music events. Strongest opposition came from the over 65s, but even in this age group, over 85% were supportive of these programmes of events continuing in future years.

We wanted to know how people felt when major music or sporting events were taking place in the city centre...



We asked people if how safe they felt in Cardiff impacted the way they used the city, for example, during daytime as opposed to nighttime, or when there are big events taking place.

Many respondents feel comfortable during the day but avoid certain areas, particularly St Mary Street and Queen Street, after dark due to concerns about anti-social behaviour, homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, and a lack of police presence.

“I avoid St. Mary St and surrounding areas from Friday pm until Sunday afternoon as much as I can.”

Large events can make the city feel safer for some, thanks to increased crowds and security, but others avoid the centre due to congestion, rowdiness, and difficulty with transport.

“I may avoid the city centre during big events as it can get particularly busy and there's more of a chance of antisocial behaviour...”

Women, disabled people, and families are especially likely to change their routines or avoid the city at night, while some feel the city has become less safe and welcoming in recent years.

“Generally I'm more cautious at night and when big events are taking place. This also complicates my travel arrangements as a lack of night buses and night trains means I sometimes need to book taxis if the final bus of the night doesn't show up.”

Overall, safety concerns lead many to limit their visits, avoid certain times or places, or rely on taxis and public transport rather than walking.

“Don't feel safe at night when there are big sporting events on as there are so many drunk leery men.”

More men than women feel safe in the city centre at any time of day or night and regardless of whether there is a major event taking place. Overall, many respondents said that a more visible police presence, particularly at night, would be welcomed.



We asked people to tell us the three best things Cardiff has to offer for visitors, and which could be used to promote Cardiff as a destination city...

“Fast growing global city with a local feel...”

Respondents felt that Cardiff offers a compact, walkable city experience and is rich in culture, history, and green spaces, making it an attractive destination for visitors. Many respondents highlighted how the size of the city meant it is easy to navigate on foot, with most attractions within a 15-20 minute walk.

“Accessibility - venues walkable and close to station and city character - green spaces, castles, and river all close to city centre...”

“The mix of green land, shopping, sporting events, venues that are all within the centre itself.”

Green spaces were highlighted frequently with Bute Park and Sophia Gardens being singled out for their natural beauty, while Cardiff Bay and the waterfront were seen as a vibrant destination - enhanced by being connected to the city centre by river boats.

“The parks are amazing. Nowhere else has this much green space in the city centre.”

They believed that the city combines vibrant nightlife, sporting events, and a welcoming community atmosphere, while also having easy access to natural surroundings like beaches and mountains.

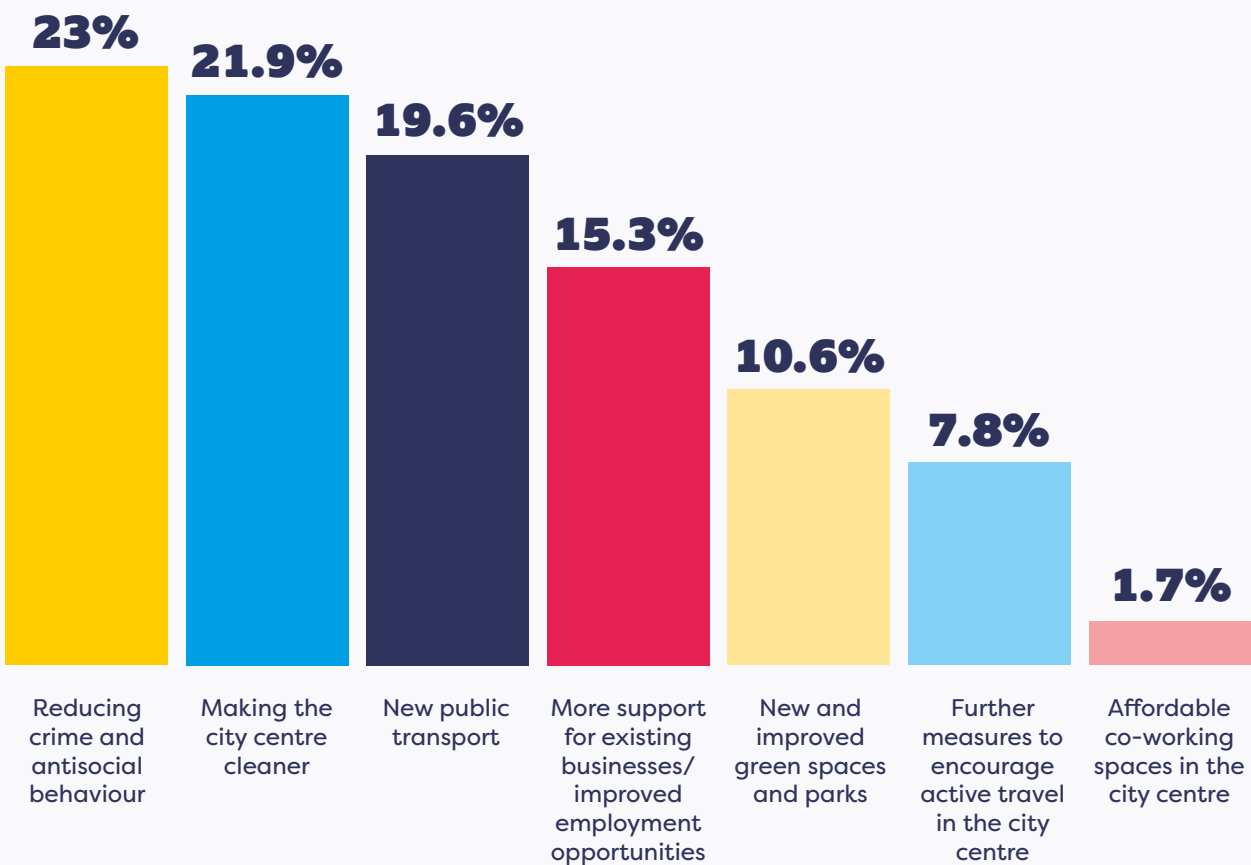
“Independent business, particularly the arcades and some of the indy bars and venues - our friends from other cities always comment about the friendly vibe...”

“Close proximity to everything... to sea and countryside!”

“People are kind here and friendly more than in other cities... I like that Cardiff grows without losing its friendliness.”

We then wanted people to tell us their hopes and aspirations for the city in the future...

Reducing crime and antisocial behaviour was the top priority from respondents, with making the city centre cleaner and adding new public transport not far behind. People want to see a city centre that is clean, green, safe, and accessible, with strong local businesses.



Female respondents most frequently prioritised improvements to public transport, the creation and enhancement of green spaces, and measures to make the city centre cleaner. There was a strong emphasis on reducing anti-social behaviour, as well as encouraging active travel.

Male respondents also placed high importance on making the city centre cleaner and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. However, there was a slightly greater focus on supporting existing businesses and improving employment opportunities.

Businesses want to see support for independent and local businesses, improved economic growth and employment opportunities and better infrastructure. Many highlighted the need for support for community enterprises and grassroots venues. They raised concerns around high business rates, and the need for more affordable commercial spaces.

And for Cardiff in 25 years' time?

When asked about their hopes for Cardiff in 25 years, respondents hoped for a modern city that maintains its historic buildings and operates with the confidence of a capital city.

Cleanliness, Safety, and Inclusivity

- A city centre that is clean, safe, and welcoming to all.
- A significant reduction in litter, crime, antisocial behaviour, and homelessness. A place where residents and visitors feel secure, with visible policing and community pride contributing to a respectful and friendly atmosphere.
- Better facilities for disabled people and families.

“A place of safety for my family to shop & socialise.”

“Clean, safe & accessible.”

Vibrancy, Culture, and Community

- A vibrant, multicultural hub, rich in arts, music, and cultural events.
- A more diverse offering, with independent shops, grassroots venues, and unique businesses that reflect the city's character and Welsh heritage.
- Preservation of the city's identity, history, and local culture.
- A lively mix of activities for all generations
- More opportunities for social gatherings, festivals, and creative entertainment beyond the current focus on pubs and nightlife.

“Shops are closing worldwide, so city centres must rebuild based on social gatherings, community spaces and entertainment.”

Green Spaces and Sustainable Development

- A greener city centre with more trees, parks, and green corridors.
- New urban nature, climate resilience and sustainable infrastructure initiatives.
- Protection and enhancement of historic green spaces like Bute Park and the River Taff.

“A global leader in creating a city centre based around nature. Make environments attractive, and people and business will come.”

Transport and Connectivity

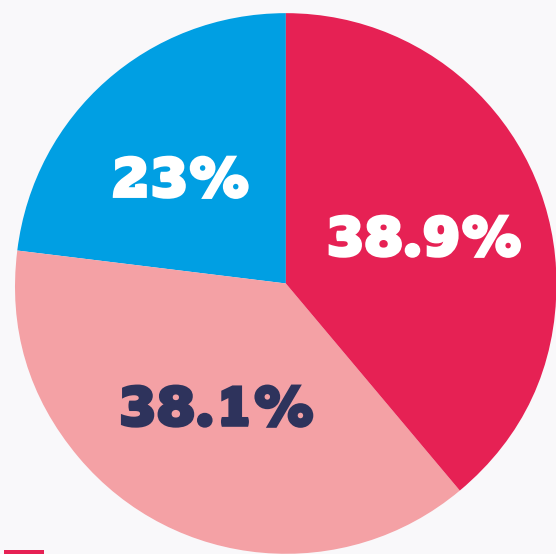
- Efficient, integrated, and sustainable transport.
- A fully pedestrianised city centre, reliable public transport, better cycling and walking routes, as well as a fully developed tram and metro network.

“A fully pedestrianised city centre with efficient park & rides and a top-notch metro service expanded by a bus network that actually works.”

And finally, we asked if people are excited about the future of Cardiff.

The vast majority of respondents were excited about what is coming next for the city.

Excited for the City's Future



- Excited
- Somewhat excited
- Not excited

The responses reveal a mixture of excitement and some concerns about future projects including the South Wales Metro, the arena in Cardiff Bay, and the redevelopment of Cardiff Central train station.

I think without the transport infrastructure in place adding new things and over promoting the city will make things much worse."

Many hope these projects will bring economic growth, new opportunities, and enhanced cultural offerings to the city. However, there are significant concerns about inclusivity, the pace and quality of change and preserving Cardiff's distinct culture and heritage in order to compete with other UK cities.

- A vibrant, prosperous Cardiff is good for all of us, but we need to make sure that we don't over expand and lose green spaces."
- Money should be spent on green spaces, community leisure facilities and improving the local natural and urban environment."

There is some criticism of overdevelopment, particularly of high-rise residential blocks, while some respondents are concerned that new developments and rising property prices may displace long-term residents and alter the social fabric of some neighbourhoods. However, by far the majority of respondents were excited about future developments...

- The city is getting better, and it was already one of the best! I hope it doesn't get so big that it loses its cosy city feel!"
- I am particularly excited by the metro. However, I would like to see a greater emphasis on architectural quality in new developments."
- Change is inevitable and it feels Cardiff is making improvements for the residents of the city as well bringing more tourists/money into the city."



Conclusion

FOR Cardiff commissioned this research at an important moment in time.

The city is going through a substantial period of change and simultaneously celebrating an important milestone.

I've served as Chair of the board of FOR Cardiff for 5 years. I was part of the working group that helped establish the Business Improvement District (BID). I've worked at Admiral for decades and have called Cardiff home all my life. What all of those things has shown me is that Cardiff can undergo significant change but still remain at its heart what it's always been: friendly, ambitious, maybe a little bit rowdy, and proudly Welsh.

What this research shows us above all else is that people and businesses are proud of our city and hopeful for its future. I am one of those people, and I'm looking forward to seeing Cardiff's future unfold.

Huw Llewellyn

Chair of the FOR Cardiff Board & Head of Property & FM at Admiral Group PLC





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