



BID 3 Action Planning Workshop Report

September 2026



Introduction

On 11 September 2026, FOR Cardiff held a workshop with key civic stakeholders and business partners to inform the first-year (from 1 December 2026) priorities for our City Experience, City Operations, Business & People and Voice of Businesses action plans.

Together, by each of the four above areas:

- we explored the opportunities and challenges facing Cardiff over the next BID term – 2026-2031, including the particular differences between the Bay and the city centre
- participants shared their views and experiences
- we discussed existing projects and ideas for new initiatives
- we discussed sharpening the specifics of FOR Cardiff's role as a representative voice for businesses

Following the workshop, we analysed the discussions to identify the key themes, challenges and differences between the city centre and the Bay that emerged through the day, and drew up priorities for each of our action plans for Year One accordingly. These are shown in the Executive Summary. We have then provided more detailed workshop notes, for fullness and transparency.



Carolyn Brownell, Executive Director of FOR Cardiff:

“The strength of this workshop was the openness, ambition and willingness to collaborate around the table.

“The workshop confirmed the real opportunity of the BID's third term to bring businesses from across Cardiff city centre and Cardiff Bay together. Exploring the alignments and differences among our opportunities and challenges will be vital in shaping our first-year action plans.

“FOR Cardiff's focus is now on turning the ideas, views and expertise in the room into meaningful action, build on the work already underway, strengthening connections between the city centre and the Bay, and ensuring the voice of businesses in our capital helps shape its future.

“Thank you to all those who took part: we look forward to sharing the detailed FOR Cardiff action plans you are informing at the end of the year.”

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Carolyn Brownell, Executive Director

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Brownell'.

Executive Summary

Key themes, most repeated challenges and differences between Cardiff city centre and Cardiff Bay identified at the workshop, and how these will be prioritised in the BID 3 Year 1 Action Plan

Key Themes

- **Unique Identity:** Cardiff's geography, heritage, culture and attractions.
- **Community-led:** Greater involvement of residents and existing community groups.
- **Better Promotion:** More coordinated information, campaigns and partnerships.
- **Clean and Welcoming:** Maintaining the city's appearance and public realm.
- **Safety and Security:** Moving from reactive responses towards prevention.
- **Transport and Connectivity:** Improving travel, wayfinding and communication, including safe movement between the city centre and the Bay.
- **Better Intelligence:** Strengthening information-sharing between partners.
- **Skills Development:** Practical training and opportunities to upskill.
- **Young Talent:** Stronger connections between businesses, education and young people.
- **Existing Support:** Better signposting and use of established provision.
- **Talent Retention:** Helping businesses attract, develop and retain people.
- **Business Representation:** on transport and connectivity; the Visitor Levy; events and infrastructure; safety and crime; visitor experience.
- Provision of communication and Intelligence to business.

Most Repeated Challenges

- **Poor City–Bay Connectivity**
- **Resident Engagement**
- **Seasonal Footfall Fluctuations** - particularly in Cardiff Bay.
- **Reactive Management:** addressing symptoms not underlying issues.
- **Perceived Safety:** concerns about crime, ASB.
- **Transport Pressures:** congestion, parking, insufficient public transport.
- **Awareness Gaps:** businesses don't always know what support is available. .
- **Access Barriers:** practical challenges can prevent businesses engaging with young people.
- **City Perception:** can influence how people view Cardiff as a place to work.
- **Changing Workforce:** employment needs and expectations are evolving.
- **Information Gaps:** unclear responsibilities.
- **Event Disruption**
- **Crime Reporting**
- **Limited Resources**

Workshop Notes

City Experience

City Experience is the delivery area for creative place making, city promotion and marketing activations; this includes seasonal campaigns and events that aim to increase footfall and spend in the BID area, and raise Cardiff's profile as a desirable destination. From 1st December, it will also oversee public art.

Discussions

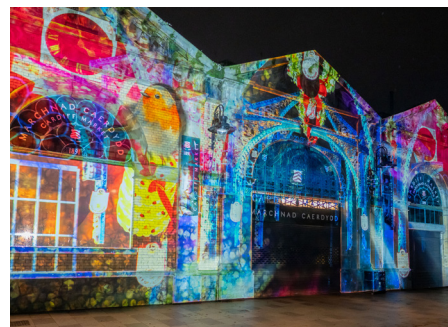
A strong theme throughout the workshop was the importance of promoting Cardiff's unique character and strengths as a destination. Participants highlighted the city's distinctive combination of assets, including its compact, walkable centre, waterfront, parks, historic attractions, arcades and cultural offer. Cardiff was seen to have a compelling story to tell, with its geography and accessibility regarded as significant strengths that could be better leveraged through future marketing and visitor engagement.

Participants also emphasised the importance of celebrating Welsh history, arts, culture and identity. There was support for a more cohesive narrative and stronger sense of city identity, helping to communicate what makes Cardiff distinctive and providing a consistent framework for future campaigns.

The role of residents was another recurring theme. Supporting community-led activity was seen as particularly important in ensuring that local people benefit from investment and have a sense of ownership.

Participants called for FOR Cardiff to consider owning the role of cohesive source of information for visitors, providing information to members and residents about the impact of major events on everyday life; but also developing awareness communications and tools for city multipliers (hoteliers, taxi drivers...) to help showcase what Cardiff has to offer, including events, attractions and experiences.

Finally, partnership working was identified as an important enabler. Participants highlighted opportunities to pool resources, coordinate activity and strengthen relationships between businesses, organisations and community groups to amplify messages and maximise available budgets.



Challenges

The most consistently raised challenge was the perceived disconnect between the city centre and the Bay. Participants described the walking route between the two areas as lacking clear wayfinding and, in places, feeling unsafe. Improving the connection between the city centre and the Bay emerged as one of the strongest priorities from the workshop.

Participants also highlighted a perceived gap between visitor-focused activity and the needs of residents. There was a view that promotional activity can focus heavily on visitors, while residents may feel disconnected from what is happening in their area. Future initiatives should therefore consider both audiences and encourage greater use of the city by Cardiff residents.

Seasonality was another key challenge, particularly in the Bay, which participants identified as being significantly quieter outside peak periods. Addressing this through events, activity and improved promotion was seen as an opportunity to support greater footfall throughout the year.

Differences Between the City Centre and Cardiff Bay

Stakeholders identified distinct residential and cultural characteristics across the two areas, particularly within communities in the Bay. This reinforced the importance of engaging with local communities and tailoring events, campaigns and initiatives taking place in more residential areas to their specific socio-economic and cultural context, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

Seasonal patterns were also highlighted as a key difference. The Bay was seen as particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in footfall outside peak periods, creating different priorities for programming and activation.

Participants also noted that the city centre and the Bay attract different visitor demographic audiences and therefore require different approaches to events and campaigns.

Priorities

A key priority for Year One is encouraging greater use of the BID area by Cardiff residents. Targeted promotion of events and offers, improved information about city logistics and funding of free activities that appeal to local audiences should be one of the main elements of delivery for marketing.

Community consultation is central to future event activity, particularly within residential communities in the Bay. Participants highlighted the importance of working with existing community groups and supporting them to lead events and projects where appropriate.

Improving connectivity between the city centre and the Bay was another clear priority. The use of participative public art in wayfinding was identified as a potential way to make the journey between the two areas more attractive and engaging, while helping to create a stronger sense of connection.

Finally, participants identified opportunities to act as the primary connector for the already packed city events programme and strengthen the role of city-wide partnerships by building on existing activity, rather than competing for attention; working collaboratively with arts, culture and sports stakeholders will maximise available resources and create a more joined-up experience across Cardiff.

City Operations

City Operations will absorb and replace the current Place Management Workstream in BID3. The existing workstream focuses on safety, sustainability and cleansing projects in the city centre, with this remit expanding to include Cardiff Bay.

Discussions

Cleanliness was one of the most consistently raised topics throughout the workshop. Participants recognised the work of the Cleansing Team, particularly its responsiveness to business callouts and its role in addressing issues such as drug paraphernalia and waste. At the same time, there was a view that some issues require a longer-term approach, with damaged street furniture, bins, paving and road surfaces needing repair or replacement rather than cleansing alone.



Safety and security were also central to discussions, with concerns relating to staff, customers, residents and visitors. Student safety and the needs of the evening and nighttime economy were highlighted, alongside concerns around safeguarding at the Bay. Participants also stressed the importance of proactive emergency planning and preparing for the requirements of Martyn’s Law.

There was a strong connection made between the condition of the public realm and perceptions of safety. Participants felt that areas that appear neglected or run down can contribute to perceptions of crime and encourage anti-social behaviour (ASB). Concerns were raised about the areas connecting the city centre and Bay, including Bute Street, Dumballs Road, Atlantic Wharf, Callaghan Square and Tyndall Street.

Travel and connectivity emerged as another significant theme. Participants felt that public transport between the city centre and Bay is currently insufficient, particularly ahead of the opening of the new arena. Wayfinding between the two areas was also considered inadequate, with a need for clearer, more intuitive routes for residents and visitors.

Information-sharing was repeatedly identified as an opportunity for improvement. Businesses want earlier information about road closures, expected visitor numbers and major events so they can plan effectively. There was also support for stronger communication and coordination between partners operating across the city centre and Bay.

Finally, participants raised concerns about amplified busking and preaching in areas including Queen Street and the Hayes, citing noise impacts on businesses, residents and customers.

Challenges

Cleanliness and safety concerns were concentrated in several locations, including Butetown, Queen Street, St Mary’s Street, the tunnel by Clayton Hotel and Taff Embankment. Participants linked these areas with rough sleeping, drug use, street drinking, crime, ASB and vandalism.

While the Cleansing Team’s work was acknowledged and appreciated, participants felt that some issues were being repeatedly treated rather than prevented. There was a desire for a more proactive approach involving better reporting, data-sharing, crime prevention and investment in the physical environment.

Businesses also raised concerns about the process for reporting crime, with some finding 101 difficult and time-consuming to use. Hospitality and evening and nighttime economy businesses reported additional costs associated with keeping security staff on duty for longer to address safety concerns.

Travel was another significant challenge. Concerns included the safety of routes between the city centre and Bay, inadequate provision for passengers when services are disrupted, poor lighting on some active travel routes, ASB involving e-bikes and e-scooters, and bike theft.

Parking and congestion were also highlighted, particularly during major events. Participants felt that insufficient information about parking, pressure on popular car parks and difficulties using public transport can discourage residents and regular customers from visiting the city centre on event days.

At Cardiff Bay, the continued reliance on car travel also raised questions about whether Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) will be sufficiently robust to protect visitors when the new arena opens.

Differences Between the City Centre and the Bay

Participants identified several differences between the city centre and the Bay that should inform future activity.

Taxi Marshals were viewed as an important service in the city centre, but participants did not currently consider the same level of provision necessary in the Bay. This may need to be reassessed when the new arena opens, while summer events at Depot and Tiger Yard could also create a need for additional provision.

The Bay has different cleansing requirements, with concerns around needles and litter in the water. Participants also noted that the Bay feels quieter and more exposed during the winter, with fewer businesses remaining open later and fewer reasons for visitors to stay beyond eating or attending a show.

The operational infrastructure also differs. The Bay already has an established emergency planning group and a long-running operations group based at the Wales Millennium Centre.

The Bay is also undergoing significant infrastructure change, including the Crossrail tram, Metro improvements and a new train station in Butetown. Participants recognised that it is difficult to determine the Bay’s longer-term operational needs until these developments are complete.

Priorities

Maintaining the Cleansing Team and Taxi Marshal services was seen as a priority for BID3. Participants also called for greater reporting of graffiti and needle incidents to help identify hotspots, alongside lobbying for improvements to damaged street furniture, paving, roads and council cleansing provision.

A city mapping and wayfinding project was proposed to help people identify safe and accessible routes around the city and between the city centre and Bay. This could also provide information on parking, active travel, bike storage and travel arrangements on event days.

Improving transport and access was another priority. Participants called for a more joined-up approach across the city and Bay, including engagement with public transport operators, consideration of later bus services and exploration of opportunities for discounted travel.

Better data-sharing and communication was identified as essential. Proposed actions included exploring a Transport and Access Forum, improving communication between businesses and the police, sharing crime data and providing businesses with earlier information about major events, visitor numbers, road closures and other activity that could affect operations.

Participants also wanted to see a more preventative approach to safety, with greater use of reporting and shared intelligence to identify and address issues. The area between the city centre and Bay was highlighted as a particular priority, with improvements to lighting, wayfinding and crime prevention suggested alongside further consideration of HVM ahead of the arena opening.

Finally, participants highlighted the importance of creating a stronger sense of arrival into Cardiff. Central Square was identified as a particular opportunity, with suggestions including public art, greening and moveable street furniture to create a more welcoming environment for visitors.

Business & People

The Business and People discussions focused on how FOR Cardiff can support businesses to attract, develop and retain talent, while strengthening connections between employers, education providers and the wider community.

Across the workshop, there was a strong appetite for practical skills development, better connections with young people and education, and making greater use of the support and expertise already available across Cardiff.

Skills and Training

Participants highlighted the need for practical and accessible training for businesses and employees, covering areas such as communication, conflict management, leadership, financial wellbeing, and Cardiff’s history and culture. There was also interest in targeted opportunities for specific groups, including young people, junior managers and underrepresented groups.

Young people and Employment

Creating stronger links between businesses and young people was a recurring theme. Suggested approaches included work experience, job shadowing, workplace visits, careers fairs and business-led masterclasses. Participants recognised that simple and flexible opportunities would make it easier for businesses, particularly smaller organisations, to get involved.

Existing Support

Businesses highlighted the breadth of skills, training and employment support already available across Cardiff. Organisations including Careers Wales, Cardiff University, CAVC and the Open University were identified as potential partners. FOR Cardiff was seen as having an opportunity to add value by bringing organisations together, signposting businesses to existing support and helping navigate available provision.

Attracting and Retaining Talent

Participants recognised that Cardiff’s overall experience as a place to live, work and study is closely linked to businesses’ ability to attract and retain talent. There was interest in opportunities that help young employees build skills, professional networks and an understanding of longer-term career pathways. Expanding existing programmes, including the Equality City Leadership and Management course, was also identified as an opportunity.

Challenges

A significant amount of support already exists across Cardiff, but participants felt that businesses and individuals do not always know what is available or how to access it. There was an opportunity for FOR Cardiff to make this landscape easier to navigate through improved signposting and coordination.



Businesses were keen to support young people but identified practical barriers to offering internships and work experience. There was strong support for simpler ways to connect employers with students and young people, with the Internship Scheme identified as an important project to continue and potentially expand into the Bay.

Participants also highlighted the difference between perceptions and the reality of Cardiff. Issues including safety, transport, accessibility and career opportunities can influence how people view the city. There was an opportunity to use evidence and data to better demonstrate the positive aspects of Cardiff and address misconceptions.

Finally, businesses are responding to changing workforce needs, including redundancies, career changes and evolving expectations around work. Participants felt that skills and employment initiatives should reflect a broader range of people, including those who may face barriers to accessing employment or the city centre.

Differences Between the City Centre and the Bay

Discussions around the city centre focused particularly on attracting and retaining talent, student and graduate opportunities, the retail and hospitality workforce, and perceptions of safety and the city centre experience. Participants also highlighted the importance of ensuring Cardiff appeals to a broad range of audiences.

In the Bay, discussions placed greater emphasis on seasonal footfall, youth provision, connections with surrounding communities and perceptions of safety along routes between the Bay and city centre. There was also an opportunity to strengthen links with sectors and communities across the wider Bay area.

Across both areas, participants saw value in creating stronger connections between the city centre and Bay through shared events, employment opportunities, business collaboration and improved connectivity.

Priorities

A strong theme was the importance of building on existing FOR Cardiff activity rather than creating significant new projects. Participants saw value in strengthening current programmes, training and partnerships, while making better use of organisations that already provide specialist support.

FOR Cardiff can add value by acting as a connector, bringing businesses and partners together, improving signposting and identifying gaps where there is a clear opportunity for intervention.

Year One priorities could include strengthening skills and training opportunities, creating more flexible pathways for young people through work experience, job shadowing and masterclasses, and developing stronger relationships between businesses, schools, colleges and universities.

Participants also highlighted the opportunity to improve access to existing support through a clearer Business & People resource and to explore targeted events focused on skills, talent and employment. There was particular interest in understanding what helps students and graduates build careers and remain in Cardiff.

Importantly, participants felt that Bay businesses should be considered within projects from the outset. Rather than creating separate city centre and Bay services, activity should operate across the BID area while recognising different local needs.

Overall, the Year One focus should be on strengthening what already exists, improving signposting and collaboration, and addressing clear gaps where FOR Cardiff can add value.

The Voice of Businesses

Across all four sessions, several consistent themes emerged. Transport and connectivity were the most prominent concerns, particularly around major events, the new arena and the relationship between Cardiff city centre and Cardiff Bay. Stakeholders also repeatedly highlighted the need for better communication, intelligence sharing and clearer routes into decision-making.

The Visitor Levy was another significant theme, with stakeholders keen to understand how funds will be allocated and how businesses can influence investment decisions. Safety, crime, wayfinding and the overall visitor experience were also recurring priorities. Across these areas, there was a clear opportunity for FOR Cardiff to act as a convenor and unified voice for business.

Transport and Connectivity

Transport was one of the most consistent concerns across the sessions. Stakeholders highlighted congestion, limited late-night public transport, parking constraints and the challenge of moving large numbers of people around Cardiff during major events. The new arena was a particular focus, with concerns about how visitors will travel to and from Cardiff Bay and whether existing infrastructure will cope.

The issue also affects the workforce, with businesses concerned about staff travelling into and out of the city safely and reliably. Improved rail services, Park and Ride and clearer routes for raising transport concerns were all identified as potential areas for advocacy.

Visitor Levy

The Visitor Levy was seen as an important opportunity, but stakeholders want greater clarity about how funds will be allocated and how businesses can influence those decisions. Potential areas for investment included transport, wayfinding, visitor experience and activity during quieter periods.

There was a strong appetite for FOR Cardiff to play a more strategic role in discussions around the Levy and ensure that business priorities are represented.

Events and Infrastructure

Major events were seen as both an economic opportunity and an operational challenge. Businesses want earlier information about event dates, expected footfall, transport arrangements and potential impacts on staff, customers and residents.

The new arena increases the importance of this issue, with stakeholders recognising the additional pressure it could place on transport, policing, accommodation and other infrastructure. Better forward planning and intelligence sharing between public-sector partners and businesses will therefore be important.

Communication and Intelligence

Businesses often do not know where to find information or who is responsible for issues. Stakeholders highlighted difficulties accessing information from public-sector organisations, particularly where multiple partners are involved.

FOR Cardiff could help by acting as a central point for business intelligence, sharing information on events, transport, infrastructure and safety while helping businesses identify the appropriate decision-maker for specific concerns.



Safety and Crime

Safety and Crime were recurring concerns across both the city centre and Cardiff Bay. Stakeholders raised anti-social behaviour, perceptions of safety, police presence and the potential impact of increased footfall from the new arena.

Crime reporting was also seen as too time-consuming, with concerns that the current process can discourage businesses from reporting incidents. There was interest in exploring simpler reporting processes and better sharing of appropriately managed crime intelligence.

Visitor Experience and Wayfinding

Stakeholders highlighted the need to improve how visitors experience Cardiff from the point of arrival. Central Square was seen as a major opportunity to strengthen the city's welcome, with suggestions including clearer Cardiff branding, public art, seating, temporary activation and improved pedestrian wayfinding.

More broadly, there was a desire for a more cohesive visitor experience connecting Cardiff city centre and Cardiff Bay.

Challenges

- Poor Connectivity
- Information Gaps
- Unclear Responsibilities
- Event Disruption
- Crime Reporting
- Limited Resources

Despite representing different sectors, stakeholders raised many of the same underlying challenges. Businesses want better connectivity, earlier information and clearer routes into decision-making. They also want greater clarity about who is responsible for particular issues and how businesses can influence decisions.

There was recognition that many of these challenges cannot be solved by FOR Cardiff alone. Its role is therefore seen as bringing partners together, making the business case for investment and ensuring that business concerns are represented consistently.

Information and communication

The timing and accessibility of information was a repeated concern. Businesses want earlier notification of major events, road closures, transport disruption and other operational changes so they can plan effectively.

This was particularly important for organisations affected by events at venues such as Cardiff Castle. Stakeholders want a more proactive approach that gives businesses sufficient time to adapt operations and communicate with staff and customers.

Unclear responsibilities

Stakeholders frequently described uncertainty about who to approach within Cardiff Council, Welsh Government, police and other organisations. This was particularly evident around transport, infrastructure, the Visitor Levy and Cardiff Bay.

There is an opportunity for FOR Cardiff to provide a clearer route between businesses and decision-makers by identifying the appropriate partner, convening organisations where necessary and providing feedback to members.

Event disruption and resources

Major events can create significant disruption for businesses, residents and staff, despite their wider economic benefits. Earlier communication and better transport planning would help businesses prepare.

There was also a clear recognition that businesses should not be expected to fund major infrastructure improvements themselves. FOR Cardiff's role is primarily advocacy, coordination and representation, rather than delivery or funding of major public infrastructure.

Differences Between the City Centre and the Bay

While many challenges are shared, the sessions highlighted different characteristics across the two areas:

City Centre: Established Commercial Core

A mature business and visitor environment with a broad mix of retail, hospitality, leisure, culture and office activity.

City Centre: High Concentration of Activity

A dense, multifunctional area where businesses, residents, workers and visitors interact throughout the day.

Bay: Visitor-led Destination

A more leisure and experience-focused environment, with activity concentrated around key attractions, hospitality and waterfront destinations.

Bay: More Seasonal

Business activity and visitor numbers vary more significantly depending on the time of year, weather and wider visitor trends.

Different Business Profiles

The two areas have distinct business mixes and therefore different day-to-day priorities, opportunities and challenges.

Shared Identity as Part of Cardiff

Despite these differences, the city centre and Bay form interconnected parts of Cardiff's wider visitor and business economy.



Priorities

The stakeholder feedback suggests that FOR Cardiff's first year should focus on establishing a clear and practical role for the organisation. Rather than taking responsibility for issues that sit with public-sector partners, FOR Cardiff can add value by bringing businesses and partners together, strengthening the evidence base and influencing decision-makers.

Three overarching priorities emerge: connecting Cardiff, improving intelligence and strengthening advocacy.

Connect Cardiff

Develop a more joined-up approach to Cardiff city centre and Cardiff Bay, focusing on transport, wayfinding, safety and visitor experience. The new arena provides a clear catalyst for bringing businesses, Cardiff Council, Welsh Government, South Wales Police and other partners together to consider how increased visitor numbers will be managed.

Build business intelligence

Establish a clearer mechanism for gathering and sharing information with members, particularly around major events, transport disruption, infrastructure changes and safety. The aim should be to move from reactive communication towards providing businesses with useful information early enough to plan.

Strengthen advocacy

Develop FOR Cardiff's role as a unified business voice. This should include providing businesses with clearer routes for raising issues, identifying the relevant decision-makers and convening partners around challenges that cross organisational boundaries.

Influence Visitor Levy investment

Seek an active role in discussions about Visitor Levy funding and ensure business priorities are reflected. Potential areas include transport, Park and Ride, wayfinding, visitor experience, seasonal activation and city centre-Bay connectivity.

Improve the visitor experience

Work with partners to improve Cardiff's arrival points, particularly Central Square. Priorities could include stronger Cardiff branding, wayfinding, public art, seating and temporary activation, while recognising the operational requirements of the space.

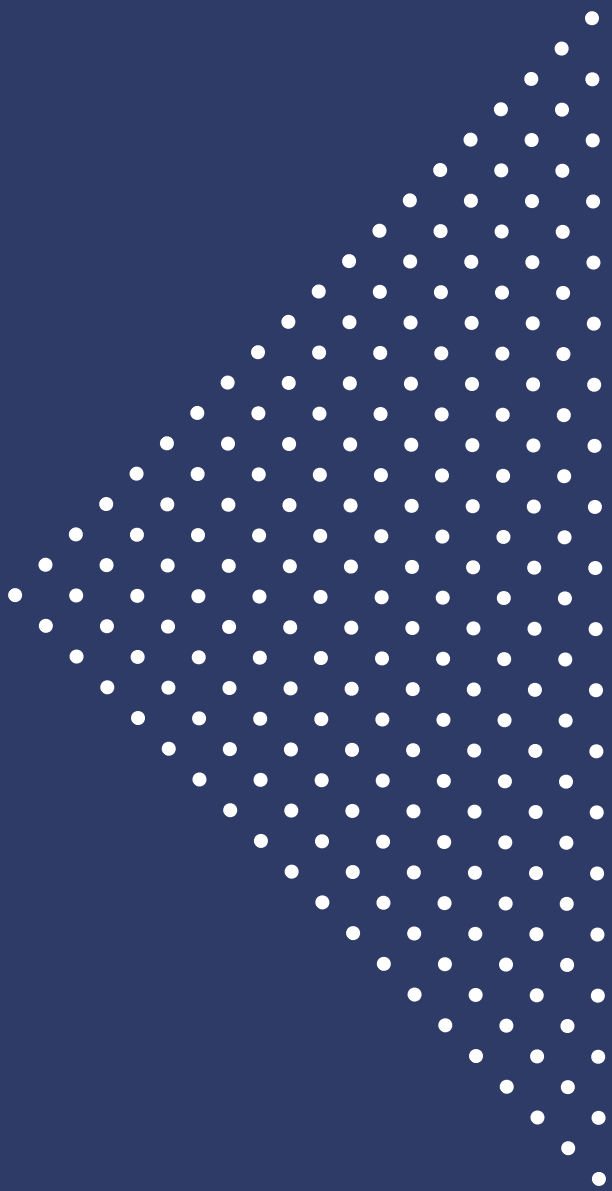
Prepare for growth

Develop a more structured approach to supporting businesses around major events and the new arena. Earlier information on event dates, expected footfall, transport and disruption would allow businesses to plan more effectively and provide FOR Cardiff with stronger evidence for lobbying for the infrastructure and services required.

Overall Year One Direction

The stakeholder engagement points to a clear opportunity for FOR Cardiff to establish itself as a trusted business voice, convenor and source of intelligence.

The first year should focus on building the relationships, information flows and advocacy mechanisms needed to influence larger strategic issues. FOR Cardiff does not need to solve every challenge directly; its value lies in bringing the right people together, ensuring businesses are heard, sharing information earlier and making the case for investment in Cardiff's future growth.



 info@forcardiff.com
 forcardiff.com
 02920 314 770

 7 St Andrew's Crescent
Cardiff
CF10 3DA