

National Contemporary Art Gallery, Wales

Cardiff Bay Anchor Site Proposal

THE PROPOSITION

Our bid sets out why Atlantic Wharf in Cardiff Bay is the prime and most suitable location in Wales for the new anchor site for the National Contemporary Art Gallery, Wales. Our proposal aims to deliver something that will be internationally relevant, driven by principles of inclusivity and sustainability, and provides the opportunity for as many people – from Wales and beyond – to be part of the Wales story.

The Cardiff Bay anchor site for the distributed model would provide a flagship platform for contemporary artists from across Wales and international artists to show in Wales. The contemporary visual art scene across Wales is well networked and connected, artists and curators work closely and support each other to promote and enable the creation and presentation of contemporary art. However, it is clear that more revenue investment is needed to develop coproduction across the network and to support Wales' thriving contemporary art scene.

A fundamental principle for this project is that this facility would support existing galleries which are part of the distributed model, and other associated contemporary art spaces, artists and organisation in Wales. Work will also be undertaken to ensure this project development works for the sector that it is intended to represent, and we would ensure that the sector is fully engaged in development work. Collaboration and consultation with experts in the contemporary art field, predominantly artists and curators is crucial to the success of this project. **We aim to work closely with artists and curators to shape the anchor site to meet their needs at this centre of excellence, enhancing production and exhibition opportunities, enabling creative practitioners to present to the largest possible audiences in Wales.**

Production and presentation are important aspects of contemporary art practice, and access to both is essential in creating an understanding of how and why art is made. **The anchor site will therefore also be a centre for conversations about all areas of contemporary art practice: from performance and moving image, through to digital and audio work, to socially engaged and participatory practice.**

This centre for contemporary art could be the place where ideas involving art in the public realm could be debated and refined; where artists could try new things and talk to the visiting public about their process and, of course, it could host touring exhibitions, give curators and artists the opportunity to work on a larger and more ambitious scale, provide a focus for conversations in the media, be the engine for initiatives such as Wales At Venice, a home for Artes Mundi, an educational resource for teachers and students at all levels and be a driver for moving forward ideas around gallery education.

The Atlantic Wharf site has been chosen specifically due to its ability to accommodate a large number of visitors, as well as its ability to attract a large number of visitors.

Furthermore, the site has been chosen on the basis of its ability to compliment other key cultural institutions – both current and proposed. As one example the Wales Millennium Centre regularly welcomes over 1.8 million visitors annually. The proposed Indoor Music Arena is also based on a business model that will accommodate a million paying visitors per year.

The current Cardiff Bay station is currently the 6th most used in Wales, with circa 1.5 million entries and exists in 2019/20. The secured funding for Crossrail Phase 1 that links Cardiff Bay and this site directly to Cardiff Central, as well as an additional station at Pierhead Street is proposed to significantly increase rail capacity. Alongside the Core Valley Line electrification which includes the existing line to Cardiff Bay the expectation is that patronage will significant exceed 2 million passengers per year. **This will make the site one of the most accessible in Wales by public transport (as well as active travel means) ensuring that it is made open for people across Wales.**

Critical to this is the development of a building that can **welcome people of all ages and abilities by all means of travel.** This includes step-free access by public transport from Cardiff Bay station and the proposed new Pierhead Street station to the new gallery.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Contemporary arts festivals such as Cardiff Contemporary have delivered Wales wide contemporary art opportunities in the Capital, nurturing a complex ecosystem of artists, curators and innovators, to deliver an international diverse cultural offer. We have piloted and tested what is possible as a catalyst for cohering our national and international arts offer. **Cardiff is committed to raising cultural aspirations across the city and Wales, to be a leading force in diverse contemporary art productions and presentation.** Working with lead partners we would work to develop the most suitable vehicle and governance model, to ensure operational success, exploring capacity, resource needs and expertise to deliver this prestigious anchor site for the National Contemporary Art Gallery, Wales.

The Atlantic Wharf anchor site for the National Contemporary Art Gallery Wales, is intended to have a prominent role to co-ordinate and facilitate contemporary temporary art exhibitions. **This will create a home in the capital city to showcase the very best Wales based contemporary art, working closely with all selected contemporary art spaces and organisations from across Wales which are part of the dispersed model, developing international showcases to exhibit and present to the largest possible audiences in Wales.** This landmark facility, would programme an exciting contemporary art programme, hosting at minimum 3 major and 3 supporting world class contemporary art exhibitions each year.

The vision is to develop an **internationally renowned platform** to receive international shows, residences and activity to further cement Wales' profile on the international cultural

stage, building on the success of Artes Mundi, Wales at Venice and established international partnerships.

The Atlantic Wharf anchor site for the National Contemporary Art Gallery, Wales, **will have a prominent role to co-ordinate and facilitate contemporary temporary art exhibitions creating a home in the capital city to showcase the very best Wales based contemporary art**, working closely with all selected contemporary art spaces and organisations from across Wales which a part of the dispersed model, developing international showcases to exhibit to the largest possible audiences in Wales. (The galleries that are part of the dispersed model are still to be determined and confirmed at time of submission).

Touring exhibitions are expected to be key part of the programme for the anchor site for the National Contemporary Art Gallery, Wales. We have described the physical facility which can easily accommodate a variety of touring exhibitions. We would also work with established national and international galleries to co-ordinate and deliver significant touring exhibitions for the people of Wales in the Welsh Capital. We would also ensure that new exhibitions exhibited at the anchor site in Cardiff, would tour to contemporary art spaces across Wales, as part of the dispersed model where appropriate.

ACCESS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOCATION

The site is the one of most accessible in Wales in terms of access to both road and rail infrastructure. It is currently served by Cardiff Bay station that serves 1.5 million entries and exits per year, as well as the A4232 that directly connects the site to the M4 and the wider Wales Road network. Cardiff Airport is also within 10 miles of the site as the crow flies, as well as a heliport within a mile of the site. In addition, the site will benefit from the electrification of the Core Valley Lines that will see direct services to Cardiff Bay from the South Wales Valleys, a tripling of the capacity of the trains, an additional platform at Cardiff Bay and a doubling of the track into and out of the Bay. This work will be further enhanced by the funding secured to link Cardiff Bay to Cardiff Central as part of Crossrail Phase 1.

As a result of the public transport provision the site will be accessible to communities across Wales, ensuring that all can access. It is the intention that the site will primarily focus on supporting attendees to access by public and active travel to ensure that the site is welcoming to all, and not just those who travel by car. This is considered an essential part of the proposal given that a car only site would restrict access to poorer communities in Wales, those unable to use private vehicles, younger people and incoming visitors who don't travel by car. Overall, the site would be the most accessible option in Wales, providing step-free access from all forms of transport, and having the greatest reach in terms of population of any proposed location. This also means that the location is also accessible to isolated areas across Wales in ways that other locations aren't.

REGENERATION POTENTIAL

The site is part of a wider masterplan that supports the creation of a nationally important cultural destination. The ambition is to create a cluster of cultural venues, institutions and organisations within a single site that provides a destination in its own right, regardless of events taking place. This approach to creating a destination linked with culture and creativity makes it an ideal site for the proposed contemporary art gallery. It will also provide for complimentary uses, in addition to the potential for the wider site to be used for display purposes. This includes a public events square that will be created in the heart of the Atlantic Wharf site that would have potential for external display of exhibitions and public performance art.

In addition, the site has a longstanding commitment to development as a visitor destination. Cardiff Council has control over the whole Atlantic Wharf site and is continuing to develop the masterplan and attract investment to the site. There is outline planning permission for the site masterplan which is currently being marketed and promoted as a cultural and visitor economy destination.

Furthermore, the site is also part of a wider ambition of regeneration for Butetown and Cardiff Bay. This approach was documented in the successful £100m Levelling Up Fund bid that outlined an ambition for a transport-led regeneration of Cardiff Bay. The aim is to deliver a sustainable regeneration programme embedded in the principles of the Well-being and Future Generations act by creating Wales' first destination where sustainable transport is the assumed means of accessing the site. As transport represents by far the greatest contribution to carbon emissions of any venue or event this is seen as a 'must do' in terms of a sustainable regeneration strategy.

The site is also located amongst some of Wales's most diverse communities and represents an opportunity to support regeneration for some of Wales' communities that have previously been overlooked for investment. The Council will put in place additional mechanisms to support links with community development to open opportunities for local residents across a range of jobs, but also providing training and support linked specifically with cultural and creative industries.

In July 2021, Cabinet approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with WMC to initiate an Atlantic Wharf Cultural Production Partnership with the aim to work towards developing joint areas of working. This includes developing a shared vision and work programme to align Cardiff's economic strategy and creative sector development plans to maximise opportunities for talent development, expressive arts creative education and to support production and performance to boost the city's international cultural profile and to drive inclusive growth within the creative industries in Cardiff. The key objectives include:

- To raise the international profile of the creative sector in Cardiff.
- To increase the value of creative and cultural production in Cardiff.
- To increase attendance and participation at creative/cultural productions events in Cardiff.
- To support a diverse talent pipeline to sustain the creative sector in Cardiff.

As part of this agreement the WMC has set out its aspiration to deliver a new Production Studio facility in close proximity to their existing building and the proposed new anchor site for the National Contemporary Art Gallery, Wales. The Council has worked with WMC to develop a viable proposal as part of the Atlantic Wharf regeneration scheme. The Production Studios project, known as 'Capella', aims to facilitate the production of local and national 'content' to support the WMC offer and help to develop the cultural offer within Cardiff and Wales, this includes innovation and digital spaces, that will provide relevant associated opportunities for the National Contemporary Art Gallery, Wales.

A dedicated Energy Strategy will also be put in place for the site to ensure that the overall development is carbon neutral. This will include elements such as the district heating network and renewable energy schemes.

The location of the building is a fundamental decision in terms of its sustainability – choosing a location that has an immediate community & cultural footfall, in order to justify its existence & sustain its usefulness. A location that is appropriately populous and/or served by sustainable transport infrastructure that provides linkage throughout City, Wales & beyond. We believe that Cardiff Bay offers such a location, and presents the opportunity to regenerate an historic 'brown-field' site

SPACE FOR LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT CENTRE

Education' & 'Community' were essential considerations when formulating proposal, particularly in regard to ensuring the long-term use & sustainability of the gallery building. To this end, the project team consulted with many local experts in the field, prior to any design work taking place – a process that would inevitably continue, ahead of any further design & construction.

Beyond the gallery itself, the building will aim to address community with art installations placed within the immediate public realm of Atlantic Wharf, the wider Cardiff Bay area & the city centre. Besides providing a physical environment in which to engage with community, the gallery would also offer an interactive digital platform from which 'virtual' visitors would be able to engage remotely with the gallery's exhibits & Education programme. This would be a key aspect of its community & educational offer - able to link users to galleries throughout Wales & beyond.

RELEVANCE TO LOCAL POPULATION

As noted above, In July 2021, Cabinet approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to initiate an Atlantic Wharf Cultural Production Partnership with the aim to work towards developing joint areas of working. This includes a shared vision and work programme to align Cardiff's economic strategy and creative sector development plans to maximise opportunities for talent development, expressive arts creative education and to support

production and performance to boost the city's international cultural profile and to drive inclusive growth within the creative industries in Cardiff.

This approach includes establishing formal arrangements with local communities to ensure that the development links with the local population. This will also include linking with Wales schools, the wider education sector and also linking with existing provision such as the Butetown Youth Pavilion that has a focus on creative endeavours.

In addition, funding has also been secured through the Shared Prosperity Fund to support a communication and engagement officer who will work with the local community to help shape the development of Atlantic Wharf.

We plan for the National Contemporary Gallery, Wales anchor site gallery and wider gallery network to operate as a beacon for inspiring our nation and our people for young people and all people. With partners we would develop the most progressive learning and engagement opportunities in the spaces described in this bid. We would provide exhibition opportunities for the children of Wales, developing young Welsh Artist of the Year opportunities, and we would work closely with the Arts Council of Wales and Wales Schools to develop significant engagement programmes.

FUTURE GENERATIONS

The proposal developed has already been predicated on delivering a scheme that is:

The most environmentally sustainable: Providing a location where access by public transport means that the car isn't the assumed means of transport, and as part of an overall development where energy is a key part of the development strategy. As transport is the key carbon emitter of any venue or event this is paramount.

The most accessible: Located amongst Wales' most diverse communities, but also in the site with the greatest population reach in Wales. Transport links will have step-free access, and the site will be easily accessible for those with physical disabilities.

A global reach: Whilst the site will provide a place for people across Wales to enjoy contemporary art, it also intends to bring the world to Wales and showcase what the nation and its capital city has to offer.

Our team have developed this exciting RIBA Stage 2 design concept, that we feel is the home that our artists need in Wales, creating a flagship destination to promote Wales as a creative, sustainable and forward-thinking nation. We look forward to sharing design concept images when appropriate. Our anchor site design for the National Contemporary Art Gallery, Wales looks like it belongs on our nation's skyline. We passionately believe we can deliver this transformational cultural project, networked to artists and citizens across Wales and the world.

This project has been developed by Cardiff Council's Culture, Major Projects, and Regeneration team.