

Civic Mission sub-strategy refresh

Cardiff University will continue to take a broad interpretation of civic mission as embodying the ways in which we help to boost the health, wealth and wellbeing of Cardiff, Wales and the wider world. This includes embracing our role to promote environmental sustainability and diversity.

In light of the developing civic mission aspirations of the Welsh Government's draft Tertiary Education & Research (Wales) Bill¹, this document sets out how we will interpret current thinking to inform our specific objectives.

Our ambition

Our ambition is to be recognised for excellence in our civic mission activities, committed as an equal partner to working with stakeholders across the Cardiff Capital Region and across Wales to promote social cohesion, equip communities with the right skills and lead a green recovery as Wales rescues, revives and renews after COVID-19.

We will build on our existing partnerships with the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council (amongst others) to ensure that our academic expertise can be utilised for public good and that we are leading by example to 'build back better' from the pandemic.

Building on the previous strategy

Our previous strategy set out Cardiff University's vision for how we would fulfil our wider civic mission to the people of Cardiff, Wales and beyond, building on over 130 years of civic engagement. The First World War saw us provide school places for young Belgian refugees fleeing conflict, whilst during the Second World War we took in over 300 students and faculty who had been evacuated from central London. The 1960s saw Cardiff academics like Tom Hopkinson challenge state-sponsored Apartheid in South Africa, whilst at home Archie Cochrane, conducted extensive fieldwork into pneumoconiosis in Rhondda Fach, with Wales' coal mining history leading to a sharp increase in respiratory diseases.

In the same way as we reacted to these major societal challenges of the 20th Century, the current social and health crisis of coronavirus has caused us to rethink radically both the feel and scale of our civic mission ambition.

Having responded swiftly and decisively to the challenges of COVID-19², we will play our part in rescuing, reviving and renewing the economic, cultural and social hopes of Wales. We have engaged with key stakeholders – including the Welsh Government and the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales – to update our civic mission priorities so they align and support our partners. In addition, we will be working to align our civic mission and public engagement³ work (as well as aligning these areas to our refreshed Innovation sub-strategy) in order to maximise both the reach and scale of how we engage with the wider world.

¹ Welsh Government (2020) [Draft Tertiary Education and Research \(Wales\) Bill](#), Wales: Welsh Government – in which civic mission is defined as encompassing “*action for the purpose of promoting or improving the economic, social, environmental or cultural well-being of Wales (including action that may achieve any of the well-being goals in section 4 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*”.

² A briefing setting out some of the actions Cardiff University has taken to innovate and work with government and health services in response to the challenges of COVID-19 is [available online](#).

³ Whilst there is a degree of overlap between Public Engagement and Civic Mission, they are treated as distinct areas. Public Engagement is orientated towards research and education, while Civic Mission is concerned with establishing a long-term relationship with a geographically-based community, and tackling a wide range of societal challenges.

Underpinning objectives

We will be known as a university:

- which takes seriously our responsibilities to tackle the climate emergency – not just through our own actions as set out in our environmental sustainability strategy, but also by how we work with others on issues around climate change and biodiversity.
- committed to improving skills not just for our own students, but by working with businesses, government and other stakeholders to ensure that our campus and our expertise is made available to meet the needs of wider society.
- embedded in its community and committed to ‘levelling-up’ the parts of our city and capital region which have historically been disadvantaged and under-represented.
- which deploys its academic expertise to help wider societal needs through a sustained and wide-ranging series of public engagement and civic mission activities which contribute to both public and policy understanding of complex issues.
- with a ‘public good’ approach to engagement that is embedded across all functions and disciplines of university life, creating a strong ‘sense of place’ within the Cardiff Capital Region and Wales.
- providing equal opportunities for all who work or study here – including recognising the huge role that staff and student volunteering plays in the delivery of our Civic Mission.
- promoting and celebrating the Welsh language, in addition to meeting our statutory requirements, by ensuring Cardiff University community contributes to Welsh economic, social and cultural affairs, including the Welsh language.
- committed to maintaining our status as a Living Wage accredited employer.
- recognised as a leader for our partnership approach to engagement with primary, secondary schools and further education colleges in Wales.
- which places research excellence at the heart of our innovation and civic mission delivery, creating greater alignment and synergy across all three areas, aligned to strategic priorities and the wellbeing of future generations.

Making this happen: rescue, revive and renew

Following engagement with key stakeholders (including Welsh Government and the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales) in the aftermath of the initial COVID-19 crisis, we reviewed Cardiff University’s civic mission aspirations to consider whether these were still the right priorities as Wales recovers and rebuilds following the pandemic. Several common themes emerged from discussions with stakeholders, particularly around the need for a “values-based recovery” with a strong focus on tackling social inequalities and the climate emergency, but also on the need to support young people and excluded communities.

As a result of these considerations, Cardiff University has identified three areas of focus for the next phase of our civic mission:

- 1) **Catalysing Wales’ green recovery.** We will capitalise on the window provided by the COVID-19 pandemic to identify what a sustainable future might look like by building on the ways in which people are reconnecting with nature and concern for our planet’s future. We will do this by:
 - work with strategic partners to ensure that Cardiff University’s plans on Carbon Net Zero align with others, and that these show synergy with wider green economic development policies. This will include improving our own performance on climate issues through our

Carbon Net Zero Panel.

- grow our [Pharmabees](#) project, creating a bee-friendly city, pollinating young minds and helping the fight against superbugs. In doing so, we will work with young people and other under-represented groups to develop conversations in the community around climate change and biodiversity and how it directly relates to their lives.
- leading discussions on how to respond to the climate emergency, working with Cardiff Council to co-manage environmentally sensitive sites around the university's estate, and working with Welsh Government to help steer the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Evidence Research Needs (BEERN) programme, harnessing our research power to evidence necessary actions within the context of the Environment and Future Generations Act.
- Underpinning our ambitions by embedding the UN Sustainability Development Goals in all that we do, and retaining our commitment to Fairtrade (having been a Fairtrade University since 2007).

2) Building Wales' skills for the future. As Wales' biggest university, we will embrace our role to support a skills-led recovery from any post-COVID recession. We will do this by:

- expanding our wider work on Widening Participation, Educational Engagement and Lifelong Learning.
- developing our memorandum of understanding with the Future Generations Commissioner in which Skills features as a cross-cutting theme – building on the Skills for the Future project, providing practical advice on how public bodies can set objectives relating to skills and take all reasonable steps to meet them in a way that contributes to the Commissioner's wellbeing goals.
- continuing, as part of our [Research Wales Innovation Fund Strategy](#), to work with FE partners and businesses to increase skills, as well as to support the aims of both the Cardiff Capital Region and the Western Gateway on skills development.
- continuing to support the development of a bilingual staff and student body.
- helping our staff and students to undertake enterprise activities and grow new businesses which support the local economy.

3) Embracing community engagement. Our Civic Mission Priorities Fund⁴ will support key projects which support the social fabric of our diverse communities. We will do this by:

- building on the success of our [Community Gateway Project](#) through continued engagement with the Grangetown community through the existing project, but also by considering how this successful community collaboration could be expanded to other disadvantaged groups in Cardiff, especially where inequalities have been (or will be) created by COVID-19.
- learning from the achievements so far of the [CAER Heritage Project](#) to consider other ways to engage communities in Cardiff University's work through an expanded Public Engagement programme.
- developing our growing work around social prescribing in the Valleys, enabling local primary care professionals to refer people to a range of non-clinical services which can improve mental health and physical wellbeing by addressing social, emotional or practical needs.

⁴ For 2020/21, this will support our existing projects with Community Gateway and School Governors, with the aspiration that these projects identify and attract new funding sources from 2021/22 onwards so that the Civic Mission Priorities Fund can widen its scope.

- seeking to prioritise projects which support Cardiff's diverse communities to reflect the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the BAME population and to reflect the social changes prompted and reinforced by the Black Lives Matter movement.

We will, of course, continue our work on improving the Health & Wellbeing of Wales and to lead Economic Regeneration in the face of COVID-19 challenges, and this work will link to our wider civic mission – but the three themes outlined above will be our guiding priority because they are the guiding priorities of our key partners too.

Critical success factors

This sub-strategy, for obvious reasons, most closely supports Cardiff University's critical success factor around "***civic mission and our contribution to rescue, revive and renew***", which we will deliver through the aspirations and activities set out above. We will deploy our academic, educational, clinical and research expertise to help governments and wider society position Wales and the UK to negotiate COVID-19 in the least damaging way possible and build the best economic, social, environmental and cultural foundation for a post-COVID world aligned to the fundamentals of the Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act.

In addition, the sub-strategy also supports our prioritisation of "***student satisfaction and experience***", and our ambition to work closely with the Student Union to give our students as rich an experience as possible under COVID-secure conditions. This extends to our civic mission activities where we will continue to involve the Student Union in shaping the strategy and delivery of project, as well as involving students themselves in our Civic Mission and Public Engagement activities.

Finally, our civic mission and public engagement work will align closely to Cardiff University's wider research and innovation agenda, including the need for elements of civic mission to be part of our "**research grants and contracts**" process.