

Better Bedford Street Project

#BetterBedfordStreet

Project Overview

17th September 2018

Try something new

One of the best ways to establish the impact of a potential change to our built environment is to trial it.

The Better Bedford Street Project is focused on testing out this approach in Northern Ireland by trialling some modest physical changes to Bedford Street accompanied by a programme of supporting activities to make the street a more attractive place. The trial will help inform the decisions about the long term improvements to the area.

The project also presents an opportunity to practice extensive collaborative working within and across Government Departments, Local Councils, private sector businesses, professional bodies and other community groups.

Healthy and happy

The draft Programme for Government sets ambitions for society, seeking to deliver important outcomes such as 'connecting people and opportunities through our infrastructure' and that 'we enjoy long, healthy, active lives' by working across boundaries, organisations, groups and communities for the common good.

Belfast City Council has set out a vision for the future of the city centre in the Belfast Agenda. It is a place that is to become increasingly attractive to live in, work in, socialise in and visit – a healthier and happier place. Good urban design and prioritisation of space can help achieve this by creating a city centre where:

- People can breathe clean, healthy air
- There are ample public places to meet and socialise for free and spend time outdoors
- Active, healthy travel is a more attractive option than using the car
- We are never too far away from nature – trees, flowers, green space etc
- People of all ages and abilities are catered for

Plan

The Better Bedford Street Project seeks to help demonstrate how this vision can quite quickly be turned into reality through the following steps:

More space for people, less for cars

The space for pedestrians along one stretch of Bedford Street will be increased by replacing nine car parking bays and the connected road space with a widened footpath which will be finished with a low-grade temporary surface. If possible, any obstructive street furniture on the existing footpath will be removed or relocated. The construction work will take place during August 2018. The widened footpath will remain in place for a minimum of 3 months after which a review of its impact will be undertaken and a potential extension given consideration.

Engaging and useful space

Starting from Monday 17th September 2018 the pedestrian areas, both existing and newly added, along both sides of Bedford Street will be enhanced to help make the street a go-to place rather than just a go-through place. Design teams will creatively 'animate' different parts of the street, in doing so providing colour and greenery as well as places to sit and enjoy. Most of the interventions will be put in place during the first week but some will follow after that. It is intended that most of the additions to the streetscape will remain in place for the 3 month trial period.

Bring the place to life

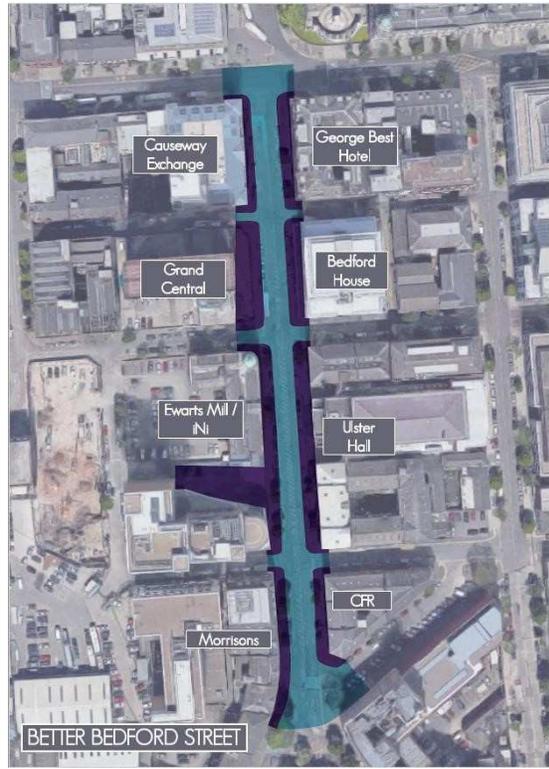
From 17th to 23rd September 2018 the following activities will be taking place in the street:

- Free lunchtime street music
- Daily walking tours of the Linen Quarter
- Extending Culture Night to include Bedford Street on 21st September with a live music event planned
- Local hospitality businesses have been invited to provide food and drink (non-alcoholic) services to the temporary spaces.

A pop-up linen heritage and retail experience opened in August 2018 at Bedford House as part of a prototype Linen Festival. Looking ahead, on 7th October 2018, a full road closure will dedicate road space to cyclists for Ciclovía and the street will have a carnival atmosphere.



9 parking bays plus roadway replaced with footpath



Some pedestrian areas to be animated

Driving change and learning from it

This project has been developed by the Strategic Design Group which is led by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Planning Group and the Department for Communities' (DfC) Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment for NI. The Group includes Belfast City Council, DfI Roads, DfC Regeneration, the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Royal Society of Ulster Architects, PLACE, Belfast Central Business District and a range of other private and voluntary sector organisations. The aim of the Group is "Working together to promote successful, inclusive, well designed places which inspire civic stewardship and have an enduring positive impact on people's lives."

Through this pilot project the group is providing an example of how the [Living Places](#) planning guidance can work in practice. The guidance sets out 10 principles for better place making. The group has sought to demonstrate that temporary changes can be brought about quite quickly and plans to use this example to drive change elsewhere. With this in mind, preparations have been made to record the lessons learned which will be shared widely.