

Cardiff's Public Spaces Busker's Guidelines

These guidelines aim to provide a means to promote positive and considerate relationships with all those who share the public space and avoid confrontational situations.

This guide covers public land - i.e. our streets and public squares. Shopping centres, churchyards and the areas in and around stations are generally private land and the landowner's permission is required to perform there.

Please consider potential economic impacts - The City Centre is a vital part of the wider city economy contributing over £1.5bn annually in turnover. Please bear in mind that inconsiderate busking can lead to meetings being disrupted, rooms having to be taken out of use, and customers choosing to take their business elsewhere.

Please be aware of who and what is around you - don't set up too near other performers, your last pitch or other users of public space. Be mindful of nearby businesses and residents.

Specified busking pitches have been allocated and busking can only take place on these sites. Busking on any other sites is prohibited. Please see map for details.

Action can only be taken against a busker following a complaint that their behaviour or performance has caused a negative impact.

What causes the majority of complaints?

The majority of complaints are caused by intrusive noise, that is noise that whether through excessive volume, long duration or repetition, makes the lives of nearby businesses or residents more difficult.

Key points to observe

Maintain safety and access - make sure that people can move past your performance easily, it is your responsibility to make sure that your crowd is well managed. If at any point there are any access or safety concerns you must stop your performance until the issue is resolved, dispersing your spectators if necessary. Be particularly mindful of bus stops, doorways and pedestrian crossings.

Take regular breaks and move between pitches - we recommend 15 minutes break per 45 minutes of performance and you will need to move position in order to avoid repetition.

Be aware of special events in the city, and note that there are places and times when busking might not be appropriate.

Be mindful of the time of day - The City Centre is home to many hotels and thousands of residents, please take extra care with evening performances.

Licences cover period of six months

Working with other Buskers

A culture of sharing and swapping pitches with other buskers is strongly encouraged. We recommend you work on a rough guideline of two hours performance time, but it can be less.

Cooperation is a great way of building community on the streets, and regular change overs are part of creating a vibrant busking atmosphere.

If there is a busker performing on a pitch you wish to play on, wait for a suitable break in their performance then politely ask them what time they are playing until, and if they would be willing to share or swap pitches when they finish. You might wait for the pitch to become available or agree to come back at a given time.

You should not forward “book” more than one pitch in advance or pressurise other buskers to give up a pitch. If you are ‘sitting’ on a pitch (i.e. not performing) and another busker comes along, wishing to play on it, work together as suggested in this guidance to reach mutual agreement, let them know when you intend to start, or let them perform on the pitch until you are ready.

Your Performance

There are no specific rules on decibel levels, however it is expected that your performance is reasonable and has a positive effect on your surroundings rather than a negative one. No amplifiers are permitted.

Perform simple sound checks to assist you to gauge responses as you go - you should ask your audience, other buskers or nearby businesses to assist where necessary.

Know your equipment - certain sounds carry more than others, and some sounds are have the potential to be more intrusive than others, for example brass instruments, amplifiers, bagpipes and percussion instruments. It may be reasonable to take more breaks and move pitches more often in these circumstances.

Keep it varied - very similar pieces one after another have the potential to become quite intrusive. Build your repertoire; vary songs, styles and tempos to keep things interesting for your audience!

If you use backing tracks, please make sure these are not left running when you are not performing.

Consider using brushes, mutes, pads and other accessories to keep volumes reasonable.

Due to the relatively narrow streets and high buildings, sounds can travel a surprisingly long way in the city centre; please be aware of this. Please don't be offended if someone asks you to make a reasonable change to your performance.

Be willing to compromise - if someone is negatively affected by your performance, be open to making reasonable changes moving a short distance, or changing the direction you're facing.

Excessive volume can cause distortion which many find uncomfortable, turning down the volume can enhance your performance for more people to enjoy.

We recommend that all performers have suitable Public Liability Insurance.