# Newport residents split over council’s plan to transform city into cultural destination



The council’s initiative, dubbed "Empowering Culture, Transforming Communities," aims to position Newport as an internationally recognised cultural destination. However, local residents have voiced a blend of sentiments—both supportive and critical—regarding the city’s current status and its trajectory.

Many long-term residents feel a palpable loss of vibrancy in Newport. Joan Musto, reflecting on her experiences as a teenager in the 1950s, remarked, "I was a teenager in the fifties working in Newport. It was a wonderful place, lovely shops from one end to the other. It would have deserved the title CITY then, not now." This nostalgic sentiment is echoed by others who remember a lively city centre bustling with shoppers.

Concerns around the city’s retail landscape have been prominent, with Liam Turner lamenting, "It was bustling in the 90s to 2000s when I grew up. The city is losing shops due to people opening quick buck flash-in-the-pan businesses and not moving with the times of online shopping and comparison sites." This shifting retail environment, combined with rising parking costs, has disheartened many residents.

Safety and anti-social behaviour are additional focal points of criticism. Claire Boon expressed her concerns, stating, "More police presence [is] needed. I don't feel safe in the daytime. Getting accosted by drunks or beggars. People fighting or arguing with each other. Sort that out and maybe you might earn some extra footfall." Such sentiments were echoed by others who argue that addressing crime and homelessness is crucial before any cultural revitalisation can take hold.

Additionally, Carol Davies conveyed frustration over the city's deteriorating conditions, saying, "Unfortunately, Newport town is a waste of space. Years ago it was a great place. Now there are hardly any shops, plus paying for car parking is expensive. This is why I and I'm sure lots of other Newportonians go to Cwmbran. I can spend hours there with free parking!"

Conversely, some residents see positive developments in Newport's cultural offerings. Andrew Lee Davies highlighted the success of recent music festivals, stating, "The Newport Music Trail has culture and life coming out of its arse. Yesterday the venues were rammed and today I got to take my kids around multiple venues to see many different types of music. 96 bands plus tours and workshops over 2 days. Needs to be applauded wholeheartedly." Similarly, Jacob Evan Richards-Powell noted the vibrant atmosphere at local festivals, showcasing the efforts of locals to attract visitors through culturally enriching events.

Despite these positive developments, scepticism surrounding the council's strategy remains. James Wilkie articulated concerns about the feasibility of cultural initiatives in a city plagued by persistent issues, stating, "Nothing is ever going to last here as it’s one of the worst cities around, constant violence riddled with homeless. Police do nothing about it to save money; the council turns off lights in areas known to be dangerous but wants to spend money on making a city that shouldn’t be a city."

As the strategy aims to enhance access to cultural activities, foster skills development, and address sustainability, the dialogue among Newport residents continues to evolve. For now, the city appears divided between those yearning for a return to its storied past, advocates of its creative future, and individuals simply seeking safer and cleaner streets.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.gov.wales/newports-17m-regeneration-thanks-transforming-towns> - This article discusses Newport's £17 million regeneration funded by the Transforming Towns programme, highlighting the council's efforts to revitalize the city centre, including projects like the new indoor market and the refurbishment of the Central Library and Museum.
2. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/23800381.newport-city-centre-shops---one-three-sit-empty-2023/> - This report reveals that over one in three retail units in Newport city centre are vacant, reflecting the concerns of residents like Joan Musto and Liam Turner about the decline in vibrancy and the impact of online shopping on local businesses.
3. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/23505665.business-owners-newport-think-issues-city-centre/> - This article highlights the challenges faced by Newport city centre, including high vacancy rates and issues with anti-social behaviour, corroborating the sentiments expressed by residents such as Claire Boon and Carol Davies regarding safety and the city's deteriorating conditions.
4. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/19459040.newport-residents-react-uk-city-culture-2025-bid/> - This piece captures mixed reactions from Newport residents to the city's bid for UK City of Culture 2025, with some expressing skepticism about the feasibility of cultural initiatives amid ongoing issues, aligning with the concerns voiced by James Wilkie in the original article.
5. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/23288800.newport-city-centre-struggling-retail-profits-plummet/> - This article discusses the decline in retail profits and the lack of demand for new shops in Newport city centre, supporting the concerns raised by residents like Liam Turner about the city's retail landscape and the impact of online shopping.
6. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/19867606.newport-empty-shops-anywhere-else-britain/> - This report highlights that Newport has more empty retail units than any other city centre in Great Britain, underscoring the challenges faced by the city and the concerns of residents about the loss of vibrancy and the impact of online shopping.
7. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25139156.readers-comment-newports-new-cultural-strategy/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data