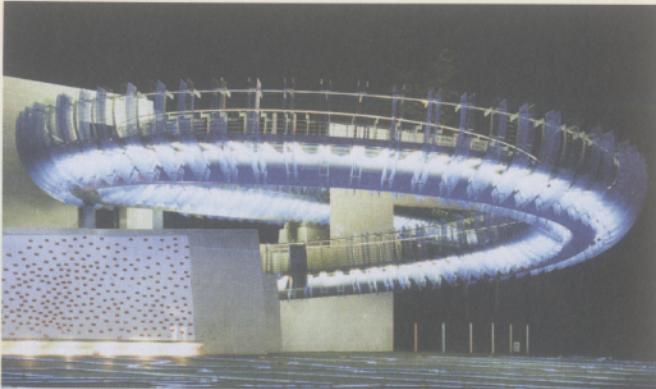


Phoenix Initiative



Coventry, England



The Phoenix Initiative covers three hectares of Coventry's city centre and is the first component of the city's wider regeneration; the most important since the rebuilding undertaken after the devastation of the Second World War. This Millennium Project links the city's famous cathedral and transport museum via an historic walk evoking Coventry's past and encompassing notable tourism attractions. The initiative also incorporates provision of new cafes, bars, housing and commercial space and an extensive programme of public art. Overall the initiative involved:

- Two new public squares
- Three new gardens
- Restoration of three listed buildings and excavation of a 13th century priory and historic undercroft
- New cafes and bars
- Coventry's BBC Studio
- 85 new apartments
- A new visitor and interpretation centre
- A new multi-faith centre and new cathedral offices
- £1 million of stunning public art

To deliver these elements the City Council and its partners faced significant challenges in topography, archaeological interest, multiple ownership and a difficult planning context involving vacant/decaying listed buildings and partial conservation area designation. The council's early establishment of a separate Millennium Forum to assume executive control for the delivery of the project was a brave decision which ultimately proved a key factor in the project's successful and timely completion.

The original site proposed for development encompassed a far larger area and the agreement reached with the Millennium Commission to concentrate on just three hectares enabled the council and its partners MJP Architects and Rummey Design Associates to focus the masterplan

effectively to achieve an impressive benchmark for future urban design.

The Phoenix Initiative has involved investment of almost £55 million to date, from sources including Coventry City Council, the Millennium Commission, Advantage West Midlands and private sector developers. The commercial elements of the scheme were substantially "pre-let" on completion in December 2003, with the BBC occupying a significant space within the heart of the development.

By reconnecting two key visitor attractions the project has generated the critical mass required to kickstart further regeneration. Some 360 new jobs have been created including 100 in the media/service sector and visitor numbers to the Transport Museum have increased from 70,000 to 300,000. The initiative has proved a catalyst for regeneration across the city with some £6.5 billion in further investment expected over the next decade.

As part of the public art consultation process over 200 meetings/workshops were held with local groups drawn from across the city's diverse and distinctive ethnic and cultural communities. The establishment of a centre in the heart of the area to cater for Coventry's multi-faith population is another positive element which can all too often be overlooked.

Foresight in the early creation of the Millennium Forum has been followed up by the creation of a management company funded by the City Council, which will provide for the future maintenance of the initiative and ensure the quality and intimacy of the original design are not compromised.

The Phoenix Initiative has changed the image of Coventry city centre and has clearly catalysed regeneration. The impact on the city's urban renaissance can perhaps be evidenced by Coventry's elevation into Growing Business's top five cities in the UK for investment and new business location.

Addressing the regeneration challenges encountered in Coventry required effective input from a wide variety of organisations, agencies, individuals and groups. Utilisation of these diverse inputs so as to maximise the benefit of the scheme is the essence of effective partnership working.

Despite being the single largest funder, Coventry City Council demonstrated exemplary commitment to this process through its early decision to pass significant control of the initiative's design to the Phoenix Forum. This Forum consisted of around 20 people representing the business community, the faith communities, historic societies and the voluntary sector.

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