

Title of presentation

Open Botanic Cycle Strategy: Lessons from engaging with Industry

Presenters

Dr Agustina Martire, Sara Lynch, Andrew Grieve & Laura Michael

Abstract

The panel will reflect on the Open Botanic project – a collaborative project between QUB Estates, QUB Engagement, NBE staff and students and Department for Infrastructure to consider alternative active travel strategies for the Botanic Avenue area of Belfast. The project investigated the potential of Botanic Avenue to be transformed into a pedestrian and cycling friendly street. During 2021 a series of qualitative and quantitative methods were used to investigate the current state of mobility on the street and the potential of a phased transformation including cycle lanes, parklets and the pedestrianisation of Botanic Avenue. The study was based on years of experience in research on streets by the academics involved and a solid interest from the Estates department to deal with the urban area adjacent to the university, to foster connectivity and inclusion for students, staff and local communities.

Some preliminary conclusions from the study were that there are over 10 times more pedestrians than cars parked on the street at any given time, and that over 80% of those surveyed (400 participants) would support more space for seating and walking in the area. The project was led by both academics and members of the estates and public engagement teams at QUB, and students from Planning and Architecture at SNBE were involved at different stages of the project.

Considering that the result of surveys and measurements were overwhelmingly positive about potential transformations of the street, despite

DfI's support of the proposals, they were not considered for immediate testing. This is the challenge we would like to discuss with the panellists from Belfast City Council and Department for Infrastructure.

The beginning of the panel will include a brief overview of the project, followed by a series of discussion questions and reflections from the external stakeholders. The session will be structured as a presentation from academics and estates members of the Open Botanic project, and feedback from Callie Persic (BCC) and Andrew Grieve (DfI) followed by a conversation between the panellists and Q&A.

We hope that by opening this discussion with a wider public it will be possible to explore further the potential of these type of projects to enhance the relationships of students and staff with the wider community, focusing deeply in the most relevant SDGs to this project, the reduction of greenhouse gases, a healthier built environment and a focus on inclusion of local communities.