

Meanwhile Use – Guidance Note (draft)

What is Meanwhile Use?

Meanwhile Use turns empty spaces and places into opportunities for communities and businesses. It is the temporary use of buildings or land for a socially beneficial purpose until they can be brought back into commercial use. Meanwhile Use enables low cost and low risk opportunities for small enterprises, businesses or community groups to have a high profile space and engage with the local community. It can bring vacant land and properties back into use and help contribute to a better physical and social environment.



Template leases are provided on the Government website to encourage the temporary occupation of empty town centre retail premises by non-commercial occupiers.

The purpose of the specimen leases is to provide an industry standard legal instrument to minimise administrative and legal costs for both landlords and tenants and ***to allow temporary occupation of empty town centre retail premises by non-commercial occupiers to take place as soon as possible.***

There are three types of lease:

intermediary meanwhile use lease (for lettings by a landlord to an intermediary, e.g. a local authority or voluntary body)

meanwhile use lease (for direct lettings by a landlord to a temporary occupier)

meanwhile use sublease

What will the Space be used for?

It is important to begin with a clear idea of what you want your Meanwhile Use to achieve. The aim might be to test new ideas, services and products without the need for a long-term commitment. You may wish to reach out to more customers by having a street presence for your online business, or to reactivate and restore a neglected space in your neighbourhood by engaging with your local community.

Advice for projects and potential occupiers

You will need to consider how many people you need to run the Meanwhile Use and what their individual roles will be. Maybe you are an individual within a larger organisation running the project, or maybe you are a group of partners wanting to run a new project. It is worth having a management diagram or a map of governance for the project. It is also worth thinking about other individuals and organisations you could collaborate with to make a more varied team, and whether you need people to volunteer, or plan to pay them.

Advice for new business, group, partnership

Writing a business/use plan is a helpful way of operating your project to its maximum efficiency. You will need to consider how long you want your project to run for, where you would like it to be located, if you are aiming to make a profit and if so what your expectation is, and what the legacy of your Meanwhile Use is.

If you are starting up a new business or organisation you will have to decide what your business structure is. The business structure could be a sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, non-profit social enterprise, community interest company etc.

Key considerations for deciding where you want to set up your Meanwhile Use are: how much space you require, who you are looking to attract and how long you want to run the project for. You could potentially use neglected areas of public space, land waiting to be developed, derelict land within estates or institutions, empty spaces such as shops, pubs, offices or even empty units within buildings. You will have to determine who owns the property in order to gain their permission to use the space. Speaking to people nearby is a good way to start, or you can make a Land Registry search.

There are many potential sites in East Sussex - you can refer to the [map](#) on this site to see where Meanwhile Uses are already taking place in the county.

Having a financial plan is an important way to keep track of budget intentions and to keep on top of your takings and expenses. Setting up your Meanwhile Use will potentially include costs of clearing the site, material costs for adapting space with fittings and furniture. For help with funding, xxxxxxxx

What will it cost?

Running the Meanwhile Use will potentially include costs of stock, staff, events, utility bills, wi-fi and insurance. These costs should be included in your business/ use plan and considered separately from your 'set up' costs, as they will be ongoing, not 'one-off'.

Is funding available?

There are a number of national and local government grants available that you can apply for. Crowd funding has also become a popular means of finding additional financial support. Refer to the links below for more details. xxxxxxxxxxxx

More helpful tips

The design of the space is key in creating an impactful physical transformation that catches people's attention. You should think about how your Meanwhile Use sits within its surroundings, how to display your products/services, whether you might need new signage and whether the space needs to be flexible in its arrangement. If it is a large open stretch of land you might want to determine how much space you occupy and whether you create a temporary structure for shelter.

Getting the space ready for use

Depending on its condition, you might have to clean and clear the existing site and provide basic amenities. There might be local businesses or organisations you can contact who would be willing to donate time/materials/furniture/services.

Fitting out your space doesn't have to be expensive. Careful use of paint and simple displays or furniture can be very effective – consider limiting your colour palette and materials for maximum impact.

Make sure that you photograph the process of setting up the space and the end result so that you can show what you have achieved.

Health and Safety is important

You will have to ensure your Meanwhile Use is a safe environment for the public, employees and volunteers. You will need to consider Health and Safety, Risk Assessments, Fire, Water, Electricity and Gas safety.

The Health and Safety Executive can provide simple advice on preparing Risk Assessments. These are simple examinations of the possible risks and what you can do to minimise them.

And there's more....

Depending on what your use is, you may need assistance to run it. People may wish to volunteer their time to help you, or if your use is intended to make money, you will need to find employees. If you are employing people to assist with your project you are likely to need an employment contract.

How will you get your project noticed?

Use a range of tactics to promote your project: printed materials, online presence and local press.

Make sure that print and online marketing tie in with the identity and branding of your
Meanwhile Use, for example using the same logo and colours. Printed material can include flyers, posters and business cards that could be distributed in local community centres, shops and even in people's letterboxes. These can be quick and cost effective to produce.

Getting noticed....

An online presence for your Meanwhile Use is important to make sure that you reach wide audiences, connect with local groups and keep people up to date with any activities or events that you are running. You might consider a dedicated website or alternatively a blog or an account on social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook that are free to set up. Write a press release to promote your project in the local papers.

Why not have a launch party?

Having an opening event or a launch party is a great way to get the word out and show people that you have arrived. It gives you an opportunity to introduce yourself and your project to the local community. Be sure to mention your opening event in your publicity materials.

Having curated events and workshops during the period of your Meanwhile Use can also further community engagement and foster good relations.

Network in your local area

East Sussex has a wide variety of local business associations and community groups that it may be useful to get in touch with about your Meanwhile Use. You may wish to check in your local area depending on where your Meanwhile Use is situated.

Keeping track of your costs

Whatever the size of your business or organisation it is important to carefully keep track of finances and accounts. Depending on your use, you might have to consider how you take payments from customers and what taxes you may need to pay.

Who pays rates?

It is likely that the landlord for the property will remain liable for business rates on the location of your Meanwhile Use during your tenancy. Allowing the property to be used for Meanwhile Use may entitle the landlord to reduced business rates. For more information contact the local borough council.

Leaving or extending?

Depending on your agreement with the freeholder or landowner you will have to leave the space you have occupied in a certain condition which might mean clearing and packing up completely.

If the project has been successful, and all parties agree, you may want to continue for an extended amount of time in which case it may be necessary to extend certain insurances, lease agreements etc.

Measuring Success

Having a detailed evaluation of your project is really important in order to understand its future. Good book keeping will show your financial position and will enable you to determine the future potential of the service or product you provided. If your Meanwhile Use is non-profit and community based, keeping track of number of visitors and contacts made will also be an important measure of success.

The next step might be moving your Meanwhile Use to another location or adapting your product or service from the lessons you learnt that would enable it to grow in a permanent location. Alternatively your Meanwhile Use might be a one-off project that intended to create local community relations, in which case be sure to keep your documentation for reference in future projects.