

Bright future for Friars Walk as power network is completed

The electricity supply needed to run Newport's new Friars Walk development – over 6.5 megawatts, which is enough energy to power approximately 3,000 homes – is now complete and in place.

Western Power Distribution (WPD), the electricity distributor for South Wales, has installed seven new substations and over 1,500 metres of cable to bring the new development to life with essential power.

WPD Technician, Paul Keenan who has overseen the project explained: "Since work on the development began in January 2014 we've worked flat out to ensure that the £500,000 worth of electrical work required for the development was ready in time.

"One of our first tasks was to divert the existing electricity supply from the original substations and underground cables – this was to enable the demolition and removal of an old multi-storey car park on the site.

"Twelve electricity substations were located within 200 metres of the car park site so we also had to ensure everything was safe and secure before demolition began.

"In fact, one of the substations was just over 40 metres away from the car park so we were on site just in case vibration from the demolition explosives caused any issues. Thankfully, there were none."

WPD completed a number of supply diversions to get the development site up and ready before the main supply could be installed.

"Pleasingly, there's been no supply disruption for customers, and everything has come together quickly despite some short-notice changes and a very tight timescale," said Paul.

During its work, WPD staff unearthed a number of buried obstacles ranging from old, abandoned electricity cables and underground services that were used to power trams in years gone by, to gas, water and sewage pipes.

"On times it was a real challenge but it's been a real team effort. We liaised closely with the developers to make sure we could get access, and we coped well with pedestrian and heavy vehicle traffic passing through while carrying out our work. Safety is always our number one priority," said Paul.

The seven new substations, while giving the development the supply it needs, will also provide spare capacity for future development.

"It's been good to be part of this new development for Newport, and now that our part is complete we hope Friars Walk will have a bright future and help to revitalise the city centre," said Paul.

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