

The Bristol Method

# how to get more people riding bikes and walking

In it for good

**BRISTOL**  
2015 EUROPEAN  
GREEN CAPITAL



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## Introduction

High quality urban space where walking and cycling are convenient, direct, enjoyable and safe for people of all ages and abilities is part of what makes a successful, liveable city. Bristol has ambitious plans to increase the number of people riding bikes and walking as a solution to improving access and mobility into and around the city, to increase physical activity, and to give alternatives for people driving

Levels of walking and cycling in Bristol are relatively high compared to many cities in the UK, and more people in the city commute to work by bicycle or on foot than in any other local authority area in England and Wales (Office of National Statistics 2013). The percentage of trips to work made by bike has doubled over the past 10 years: one in ten is now made by bike.

There is good potential to further increase the number of people riding bikes. As many as two thirds of residents say they would ride a bike, or ride more, if the city was safer for people on bikes. Nearly two thirds of trips made by car in the city are shorter than eight kilometres. In a compact urban environment like Bristol, if walking and cycling are perceived as more convenient, safe and direct, then there is no reason why many more trips couldn't be made on foot and by bike.

Clearly safety is one key factor, and better shared space, protected bike lanes, traffic-free paths and a wide roll-out of 20 mile per hour (mph) speed limits across much of the city are part of Bristol City Council's solution to increasing levels of walking and cycling.

In addition, the city has invested in giving people the skills to cycle and knowledge to walk and ride a bike more, with promotional campaigns encouraging responsible cycling and driving behaviours, bike training. There is also emphasis on the school journey, and ongoing work with Sustrans to enable children to bike, scoot and walk for the journey to school. The idea is that sustainable travel habits established at a young age will help establish sustainable travel habits for life



# Challenges and opportunities

Bristol has a number of key challenges and opportunities for increasing levels of people walking and biking.

Challenges	Opportunities
<p>Heavily trafficked radial roads into the city centre, and multi-lane highways through the city centre, with people driving from well outside the city</p>	<p>20 mile per hour speed limits are planned for 90% of the city's roads</p>
<p>A network of rivers, waterways and a harbour that create natural barriers, with few – often heavily trafficked – crossings</p>	<p>High levels of existing commuting by bike and walking, helping to normalise and promote sustainable travel</p>
<p>Lack of continuity and coherence of funding and investment in walking and cycling, compared with road and public transport spend</p>	<p>Well-developed behaviour change work in schools and in other daily destinations</p>
<p>Bristol covers a wide area, with outlying areas of medium urban density, and contains many hills, some steep</p>	<p>A high level of bike ownership and aspiration to ride a bike amongst residents</p>
<p>A lack of capacity to get things built</p>	<p>Partnership working between local authorities (Joint Transport Plan) within wider region (West of England Partnership) and with charities (Sustrans) and consultants</p>

This module covers the work of Bristol City Council in enabling people to walk and bike more, as well as case studies of successful ways of doing this, and groups that are partnering with the council to transform local travel in and around the city.



## Bristol's leaders are cycling role models

Role models for behaviour change can come in many forms: relatives, teachers, managers at work<sup>1</sup>. However it is perhaps essential that leaders in a city wanting to see policy change must, where possible, authentically 'live' that change, to establish credibility. George Ferguson, the Mayor of Bristol, is regularly seen out and about on his bike, as are leading figures in the business and education community, as well as many people working within the city council.



Mayor  
George  
Ferguson

<sup>1</sup>Sherwin, H., Chatterjee, K. and Jain, J. (2014) An exploration of the importance of social influence in the decision to start bicycling in England. Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice, 68. Pp. 32-45.

# Case Studies

## The Bristol to Bath Path: Developing and building a network for people riding bikes and walking

Bristol has a big ambition for [cycling](#). By 2020 the aim is for one in five commuting journeys to be made by bike, and for cycling to be easy and convenient for all ages and abilities, as well as for regular trips to school or the shops.

Bristol has a long history of creating space for people walking and cycling. Sustrans redeveloped the Bristol to Bath Path from a former railway (a 20km long shared-use pedestrian and cycle track) more than 30 years ago, and over the years this has become a key radial travel corridor that sees many thousands of journeys on foot and by bike each day.

The median growth in cycle usage on the path has been about 7% year on year since the first bike counter was introduced in 1998. Annually there are more than 2.5 million trips by foot and bike being made each year on this route, approaching 7,000 trips a day.

2015 has seen the widening and improvement of sections of the Bristol and Bath Path to accommodate higher usage, particularly by people riding bikes, and to reduce conflict with people walking. New cycle lanes and tracks have also been built along key road corridors that link and upgrade Bristol’s existing network of cycling routes. Making it easier for people to negotiate the city centre on foot and by bike is a key ambition, and planned additions to Bristol’s cycling network, and the philosophy for developing protected bike lanes in the city centre, are explained in this [film](#).

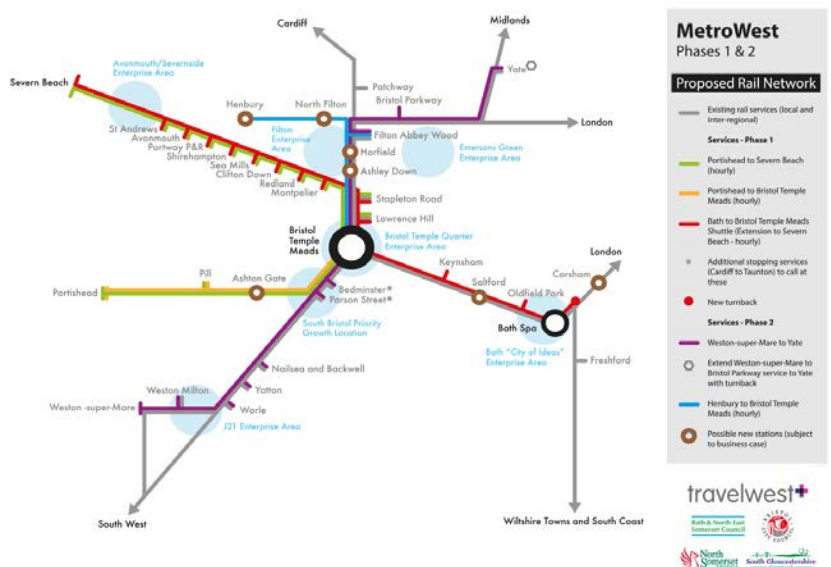
In 2015 the Bristol Cycle Strategy was launched, including an ambition for 20% of commuter trips into the city centre to be made by bike. Successful bids to UK government funding specifically for cycling and sustainable transport initiatives has enabled investment of about £16 per head since 2008. The strategy maps out a cycle network of over 300 route-km and aims to make cycling simpler, safer, more attractive, and a realistic way of getting around for people of all ages and abilities.

## Improving the integration of walking, cycling and public transport to access key destinations

The Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone (EZ) is located in the heart of Bristol around Temple Meads railway station (the rail terminus in the heart of the city, linking to Bath, Reading, London, South Wales and the North and Southwest of England). The 70 hectare brownfield area is being re-developed to host 17,000 new jobs that will be generated in the city in coming years.

£21m investment through regional enterprise funding will improve the walking and cycling environment within and to the EZ, which, in combination with improved bus and rail services, will significantly improve access by sustainable modes. It will greatly enhance the urban realm, which is currently dominated by motor traffic.

The walkways and greenways developed will also improve access for people walking and cycling to Temple Meads station.



## Changing how children get to school

Since 2012, Over 77,000 primary and secondary school children have benefited from work to promote active, low carbon travel (walking, cycling, scooting) to school in Bristol. Delivered by Sustrans in partnership with Bristol City Council, the aim is to work with pupils as well as their parents, teachers and school staff.

Sustrans' officers deliver a range of activities that promote and facilitate sustainable travel in participating schools. Working with a member of staff who is the nominated champion within the school, they:

- Identify the school's key overall objectives and tackle the barriers to walking, cycling or scooting.
- Plan and implement a bespoke schedule of activities, events and curriculum sessions tailored to the school's needs, aspirations and resources.

The aim is to increase knowledge and understanding of sustainable travel, and inspire, support and motivate behaviour change, imbedding active travel within the culture of the school. This is a long term process of engagement, but the results speak for themselves:

- regular cycling levels have increased steadily since engagement with Sustrans, from 8.4% before engagement to 12.8% after two years
- levels of pupils who report regularly being driven to school have decreased year upon year, from 44.8% before engagement to 34.4% after one year (a difference of 10.4 percentage points) and then to 31.2% after two years (a further decrease of 3.2 percentage points). This is an overall decrease from baseline of 13.6 percentage points.

In addition, focus groups have found that children, who particularly valued the skills learnt through hands-on activities, felt empowered to travel sustainably as a result of the project.

Whilst the rewards are great, there are significant challenges including tying activities to the already busy school timetables, identifying new school champions if the existing one leaves the school, and keeping up the momentum with a range of different activities during the whole school year. However, good partnership working with schools combined with Sustrans' officers' skills and enthusiasm has ensured the continuing success of the project.

### Quotes from participants

"We have seen a definite decrease in traffic outside of school gates with far greater children cycling or scooting to school."

"The whole community, those inside and outside of school, staff and volunteers, parents/carers are now very much bike aware; they now know the joy cycling can bring. We had between 30 - 40 children cycling over the two days of Cycle Sports' Days in July, who could not cycle prior to the event. Every child in the school got on a bike. What more can I add!"

"Children who have previously been inactive are now cycling to school. Their overall engagement with school has increased and many are significantly more self-confident. This increase in self-confidence, motivation and engagement was unexpected."



## The impact of grass roots cycling organisations

The Bristol Bike Project 'Roll for the Soul' and Life Cycle UK are just two of the cutting-edge grassroots cycling organisations and community interest companies supporting cycling culture in Bristol.

Roll for the Soul café is a social enterprise that has become a hub of Bristol's cycling culture, celebrating the city's emergent love of riding bikes, whilst creating an atmosphere that attracts both cyclists and non-cyclists.

The café provides space free-of-charge for cycling-related events and meetings, and a workshop for people to bring their bikes in for fixing, and to learn about basic bicycle maintenance themselves.

"One of things I'm really happy we have been able to do is to provide an events space and a meeting space for lots of cycling organisations around Bristol. So Bristol Cycling Campaign have probably three or four meetings a week here (...) We have done a lot of events with Lifecycle UK who are a charity based in Bristol who run projects that open up cycling to people who otherwise might struggle to get involved as they have physical disabilities or learning disabilities, so they are all about making cycling more accessible to those sort of harder to reach groups, and we provide a space that they can use for their events and so on (...) Similarly the Bristol Bike Project and the Cycle Festival have all of their meetings here now so I think we have made a decent start at trying to provide that hub for all those disparate groups around the city."

**Roll for the Soul**



## Life Cycle UK – developing cycling confidence

Life Cycle works to enable more people to cycle by tackling the barriers that prevent them from 'giving it a go'. Life Cycle provides direct practical support to around 4000 people a year to achieve this.

For example, it runs a bike refurbishment workshop inside Bristol's prison to teach inmates how to clean and repair bikes. Once fixed, they are sold at affordable prices to people who want a bicycle. And for those who stop cycling due to something as simple as a puncture, they offer maintenance training sessions and free bike checks at community events.

Life Cycle also teach the skills needed to cycle confidently on Bristol's roads. Children are trained in groups to national standards, and adults are trained individually, with instructors assessing and

developing skills to improve confidence. There is also ongoing support through a programme of bike rides aimed at specific groups, such as older people and people with physical or mental health issues.



A young person learns how to keep his bike roadworthy



# KPMG Viewpoint



## Active cities pay for themselves Ben Wielgus

Active cities are healthier, happier and more competitive than their couch potato peers. Designing physical activity into the infrastructure of a city means people move around more and reap the physical and psychological rewards. I believe that this will translate into higher wellbeing, lower crime rates, less pollution and savings on health care.

Inactive populations are expensive by contrast. Physical inactivity will kill 9% of the population in the UK – as many as smoking<sup>1</sup> – as well as vastly increasing the chance of developing heart disease, breast cancer and colon cancer. Physical activity and access to nature has also been shown to alleviate depression, reduce stress and improve general wellbeing<sup>2</sup>. It can also help promote creativity and provide space for families and communities to build relationships.

So city leaders need to create an environment that encourages activity not just as a specific activity but as part of day to day lives. That means planning an infrastructure that encourages people to move from one area to another on foot or bike. Increasing cycle lanes, creating streets and pathways that are pleasant to walk along, improving river walkways and reducing pollution and litter are all physical ways of doing this and there is also much that can be done to help reduce the mental barriers to taking more active travel options such as making active travel the more fun, more relaxing, more enjoyable option.

Cities need to think big. Copenhagen, a former European Green Capital, has a stated intention to become the best city in the world for cycling and has a city-wide strategy to promote it. Others like Boston have relocated some of their roadways underground in a project called the Big Dig, leaving safe space for pedestrians and cyclists on the surface. Bristol too, is already one of the most active cities but is looking to do far more.

Public transport is an important part of the mix. Passengers walking or cycling to and from bus stops and stations all adds to the active city vibe, especially if the public realm supports it. This often comes alongside gradually dissuading drivers via congestion zones and parking charges and supporting the shift through active travel initiatives in schools and workplaces to help make it easier.

Connected infrastructure will encourage behavioural change. Office buildings that provide cycle racks and showers need to link up with safe, segregated cycle paths and walkways. Every time a road is re-laid, city authorities can look at putting in extra trees, cycle lanes and more paths.

Of course, making the city environment fit for its fitter citizens has a price tag. Planners must keep in mind the return on investment through the lower health costs of a fitter population.

But the benefits go much further. More foot traffic boosts local employment and tourism, less traffic means less productivity lost to congestion – estimated to reach £21 billion in the UK by 2030<sup>3</sup> - not to mention the benefits of community involvement, lower crime rates and more customers for businesses because of greater footfall on the streets.

Active travel investments create value for employers, healthcare and insurance, businesses and the individuals. An innovative way to raise capital would be through the creation of an “Active City Bond” that would seek upfront investment that is then repaid by capturing the value from the groups and individuals who would ultimately benefit (such as the health service, businesses and individuals). These kinds of value capture mechanisms will become more common in the future.

With a trend towards greater devolution over budgets, cities have more scope to invest in these life-improving measures that should eventually pay for themselves. Diverting money scarce funds from the police and health services would be controversial. But when city leaders take into account the real benefits of active travel and the reduced pressure on these services, the decision to invest should be straightforward.

<sup>1</sup> Lee, I., Shiroma, E., Lobelo, P., Puska, P., Blair, S., & Katzmarzyk, P., For the Lancet Physical Activity Series Working Group. (July 2012.) Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy. - PubMed - NCBI

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications\\_and\\_Research/Research/Papers/Synopsis-of-Research-Papers.pdf](http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications_and_Research/Research/Papers/Synopsis-of-Research-Papers.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Traffic Congestion to Cost the UK Economy More Than £300 Billion Over the Next 16 Years - INRIX

## **BRISTOL 2015**

European Green Capital is a prestigious annual award designed to promote and reward the efforts of cities to improve the environment. Bristol is the first ever UK city to win the award.

European Green Capital is run by The European Commission, recognising that Europe's urban societies face many environmental challenges – and that sustainable, low-carbon living is vital to the future of our cities and our people.

The award was first won by Stockholm in 2010. Since then, Hamburg, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Nantes and Copenhagen have carried the torch. Bristol will hand over to Ljubljana at the end of the year.

## **THE BRISTOL METHOD**

The Bristol Method is a knowledge-transfer programme aimed at helping people in other cities understand and apply the lessons that Bristol has learned in becoming a more sustainable city, not just in 2015 but in the last decade.

Each module of the Bristol Method is presented as an easy-to-digest 'how to' guide on a particular topic, which use Bristol's experiences as a case study. The modules contain generic advice and recommendations that each reader can tailor to their own circumstances.

The Bristol Method modules are published on the Bristol 2015 website at [www.bristol2015.co.uk/method](http://www.bristol2015.co.uk/method)

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