all politics is local

7 September 2009

Peterborough City Council:

Travelchoice

Summary of policy/project

Travelchoice in Peterborough is one of the three DfT Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town projects.

The overall aims of this behavioural change project were to (a) improve the quality and availability of up to date accurate travel information (b) encourage and enable more people to try walking, cycling, car sharing and public transport and (c) provide a positive experience for existing and new sustainable transport users.

Description

A number of sub schemes were developed to help deliver its overall aims. Sub schemes included personalised travel planning for 50% of the urban population (30,000 households), interactive journey planning kiosk, real time passenger information at bus stops, interchange information, travel information centre, business and school travel planning, interactive mapping, city wide marketing campaigns, adult cycle training, Text&Go (bus times via SMS), events etc. While all the schemes delivered through Travelchoice can stand alone, they combine to form a holistic programme. The concept of measures linking together and reinforcing each other – creating synergies – is important in generating behaviour change, as well as for generating best value from each scheme.

The programmes delivered can broadly be compared as delivering six types of Smarter Choice schemes: Personalised travel planning; Travel awareness campaign; Public transport information and marketing ; Workplace travel planning and car sharing; School travel planning; Walking and cycling promotion.

What problems does the policy/project solve?

This project has resulted in a number of key benefits: Reduced congestion, reduced CO_2 emissions (estimated at around 6400 tonnes per year), health benefits through encouraging people (adults and children) to use more active forms of travel (e.g. walking/cycling), enabling greater freedom (through adult cycle training, accessible public transport information etc), measures are cost effective and offer value for money, bolsters other projects (e.g. infrastructure projects, school travel planning etc), links into other key areas (e.g. climate change agenda, carbon reduction commitment, creating the UK's Environment Capital, accessibility action plans, inclusivity, security, health promotion, etc), builds on relations with key partners (e.g. health, local businesses, public transport operators etc), improved perception of Peterborough City Council, transport contributions secured via S106 through new developments and Peterborough at centre of sustainable transport – recognized nationally.

Has the idea worked else-where?

Whilst a number of the individual projects have been established elsewhere, the three Sustainable Travel Demonstrations Towns represent the first time a high intensity package of measures has been implemented in one place. It is anticipated that the results of these three projects will be disseminated to other local authorities.

---

7 September 2009

Peterborough City Council:

Travelchoice

all politics is local

What were the difficulties of implementation?

It is important to secure senior management buy-in from the beginning to ensure the branding and projects have approval. From our experiences, I'd recommend being flexible in terms of both projects and approach. Whilst many people see the benefits of considering their transport options for each trip, there are always some 'die hard car drivers' who would rather sit in a queue of traffic for a short trip than hop on their bike.

These are never going to be convinced so its best to spend time elsewhere! Likewise with companies working on travel plans, if the designated coordinator doesn't walk the walk, how are they going to persuade others to? It's important to engage the right people to spread the message. Change the focus of the benefits to 'sell' sustainable travel to different people. When promoting travel plans to businesses, focus on cost savings, promote health benefits to the NHS, environmental benefits to companies with strong CSR, eco-minded individuals, etc.

If we were to repeat the project, we would like to add measures to monitor the effect of this project on health and CO_2. The Peterborough Travelchoice project did not use CO_2 reductions or improvements to health as indicators for the project but there is certainly the potential to. It would be helpful to engage health and environment sector funding though careful consideration about how best to undertake this would be required. For the purposes of this projects, we have used the modal shift results to provide an indication of the CO_2 reduction (6400 tonnes per year). It has proved very difficult to calculate what effect individual projects had on the overall figure as the sub schemes are so interdependent. The last point is that we do not currently have an understanding of any induced traffic due to lack of 'locking in' measures (e.g. Road allocation, charging etc), but this was never an intention of the project.

What is the cost of implementation?

Department for Transport grant of £3.24 million over 5 years 2004-2009 (including salaries and office accommodation). Capital investment through Local Transport Plan funds ran alongside this.

What is the evidence of success?

Headline results from the Travel Behaviour Research carried out in late 2008 (travel diaries and interviews with 4000 residents) showed a 9% reduction in car trips, a 12% increase in waling, 14% increase in cycling and 35% increase in public transport compared to the 2004 baseline. The full report is online.

The DfT are currently analysing data from all three Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns and a report is due to be published this winter.

Would this work in other Councils?

This project consisted of a number of sub-schemes which together have resulted in very positive outcomes in Peterborough. Each scheme provides a key

big ideas

7 September 2009

Peterborough City Council:

Travelchoice

contribution to the overall project but also interlinks to boost the benefits that can be achieved. Whilst many of the measures would work anywhere, the exact package would depend on the demographics and existing transport infrastructure of the town/city in question.

What advice would you give any Councils wishing to adopt this idea?

An accessible brand, ongoing marketing and consistency of information ties everything together.
Joint working with internal and external stakeholders on joint projects maximises impact.

Wherever possible 'lock in' benefits through sustainable transport route and service improvements, as well as measures to discourage car use.
Have a robust programme outlined at the start but keep it flexible.

Implementing new technology needs patience and technological knowledge.
Encourage behaviour change when key life changes are happening (e.g. moving house/school).

Other Comments

Whilst the STDT project has come to an end, Peterborough City council has recognised the benefits of the project and has put in funding to continue the project begun. As well as building on some schemes already developed (e.g. business travel plans, promotions, real time passenger information etc) the focus now is to include the whole of the unitary boundary. Previously Travelchoice was focussed on the

urban core of Peterborough. In this area car use fell, however in the rural areas, car use has increased which brings about a whole new set of challenges to work on!

For more information

For more information on this scheme please contact Nicola Francis, Travelchoice Team Manager at the Transport and Environment unit. Email: Nicola.francis@peterborough.gov.uk or phone 01733747474.

Localis is an independent think-tank dedicated to issues related to local government and localism. We carry out innovative research, hold a calendar of events and facilitate an ever growing network of members to stimulate and challenge the current orthodoxy of the governance of the UK.

To find out more about the work of Localis or to discuss possible membership opportunities, please visit our website at www.localis.org.uk or phone 0207 3402660.

all politics is local

Localis is constantly looking for good new ideas to showcase. If you would like to make a submission to Localis' Big Ideas—please contact Tom Shakespeare via email on tom@localis.org.uk or phone 0207 340 2660