

Transport

WINNER

Bournemouth University - Senior managers have no reservations about the travel plan

In 2000 Bournemouth University had a travel headache. Demand for car parking was seriously exceeding supply, permits were uncontrolled, and the bus service between its two campuses, and from them to local areas, was frequent but had a poor image.

A Transport Working Group was established, and conducted a travel audit, got staff and student opinions through a survey and focus groups, and consulted with outside bodies such as major trip generators in the area. The result was the launch of a Travel Plan in 2003, which included the following measures:

The result was the launch of a Travel Plan in 2003, which included car parking charges for staff and students (with all income ring-fenced for transport and environmental improvements) and a re-launch - in partnership with new bus operator, Wilts & Dorset - of the Unilinx bus service. This had a newer fleet, enhanced services (subsidised by parking fees), higher frequencies and a revised route structure to also serve Bournemouth Arts Institute and Bournemouth & Poole College of FE. The Plan has also included establishment of a car share scheme through Carsharedorset, and measures to promote walking and cycling to the University.

Stuart Laird, the University's Site Operations Manager and Travel Plan Co-ordinator, observes that "over the next 12 months the improvements at our campuses were extremely positive, with reduced congestion, easier parking and a 20% rise in bus passengers - one of the fastest increases for any UK bus operator." The success has stimulated additional measures such as provision of 'real-time' information at reception areas and main bus stops; introduction of a new bus route; and a major push on cycling promotion. This included the introduction of a business mileage rate for cycle use, as well as provision of more showers and sheds. Negotiations have also begun with Bournemouth Council to develop a cycle path between the two campuses. Amanda Williams, the University's Environmental Officer (a position funded by the parking fees) notes that "the implementation of the Travel Plan was not without its hurdles as there was some



resistance to parking charges. So it was important to ring-fence the income and continuously communicate our objectives."

Stuart Laird also notes "the importance of a partnership approach. We worked with unions, for example, to overcome their members concerns - as with the introduction of reserved spaces for late starters and shift workers.

Another crucial factor in our success was securing senior management buy-in from an early stage - demonstrated by the fact that the scheme has involved them giving up their reserved parking places!"

Stuart Laird and Amanda Williams

Judges' Comments on Transport

All three shortlisted entries for this year's transport category demonstrate that there is a 'win-win' solution to seemingly intractable solutions of too many cars in and around campuses. The solution involves rationalising (and sometimes reducing) the issue of permits, charging for car parking, and recycling the fees into improved bus services (working in partnership with bus operators and local authorities) and facilities to encourage cycling and walking. This can overcome the inevitable resistance to parking charges, providing that there is senior management support, and lots of consultation.

The winner, Bournemouth University, has done all these things very effectively. It has also worked with a wide range of internal and external partners and stakeholders. The result is an impressive rise in bus usage, cycling and walking, and a reduction in car parking and usage. The scheme also demonstrates how important it is for senior management in higher education to lead by example - and there is surely no more convincing signal of support from the top than giving up a reserved parking space!