



Intervention Case Study: Bristol Bites by Bike

Bristol Bites by Bike is a brand new food festival on the run, the first of its kind to UWE: An innovative cycling event which celebrates the local landscape, and food and drink produced on its doorstep.

Introduction

Bristol Bites by Bike saw the introduction of a new cycling engagement event to the university in order to promote active travel, local cycling routes between the campus and city centre whilst getting to know the local scenery and local eateries! This was delivered by the Sports Participation Coordinator of the Students Union at UWE, supported by the Active Travel team for promotion, UniCycle for funding, and partner organisations (Yo Bike Bristol, The Pumphouse, Joe's Bakery). The observed impact was an increase in students cycling in the city and utilizing local bike routes and bike hire options available to them.

What was the problem you were addressing?

This concept was born out of the need to provide fun, creative and innovative events to engage students into the world of active travel. We have a huge wealth of safe bike routes around the city, and a plethora of affordable, discounted hire options for students to gain access to a bike affordably. The motivations were to provide an accessible event to introduce students to cycling in the city, aiming to build their confidence cycling not only on bicycle paths but busy city roadways, and to provide a fulfilling and fun experience; to ensure they would be likely to consider using a bike as a means of active travel, or for fun, in the future. For this singular event, the target audience were students of the university with no particular demographic; any under or post graduate student could attend. The event was held on a Wednesday afternoon which was also coincidentally a big sporting event day (Varsity Day) which meant predominantly those that could attend would be those outside of the sporting community. This was important to engage students who currently were not active, or not confident in a traditionally 'sporty or fitness' environment. Offering accessible, non-traditional events for individuals to keep moving and lead a healthy lifestyle is very important to all of the partners involved in the project.

What did you do and how?

The idea was very simple, students would turn up and get kitted out with a bike, before following an interactive map, stopping at cafes and restaurants to sample a variety of locally produced appetisers. By the time they reach the finish, cyclists will have enjoyed over a dozen different bitesize tasters and be full to the brim with the satisfaction that they've already burnt it all off!



The event was organized by a students' union staff member who also acted as the ride leader for the entirety of the event. We were kindly supported by Yo Bikes Bristol who delivered the correct amount of bikes to campus, and provided enough codes to offer a free 24hr use of the bike for each participant. Participants arrived and the University Active Travel team were kindly on hand to assist setting up everyone's Yo Bike apps and the bikes with free passes so they were ready to roll. We had previously approached a number of our favorite local eateries to ask for support for the event, a number of which were happy to oblige and provided free food and drink for the riders. Otherwise, at the other stops, the ride leader simply purchased the tasters and shared them around for the riders to enjoy before heading off to the next stop on the journey!

The ride began at UWE Frenchay Campus and followed the Concorde Way cycle route to Gloucester Road, through the city centre briefly, before enjoying a pootle along the beautiful historic Harbourside. Most participants then either made their own way back with or without the bikes. A number cycled the route back to Frenchay Campus meaning they completed a huge 13.2 mile ride – which for many of them was the furthest they had ever cycled! We had 19 participants in total for the first ride, which had only been very lightly promoted through existing channels a fortnight prior.

What results did you achieve?



The main outcome of this event was that we got 19 students who had either never ridden or not ridden for years – to get out on a bike, cycle a minimum of 6.6 miles, and enjoy every second! We measured this both with verbal feedback on the day at the event and then followed up with a simple 10 question survey to ask riders about their experience. We wanted to find out how we could improve the event for future instances and also to capture the impact the ride had on them.

We found that 80% of the students who took part felt the event had been 'extremely useful' to show them new and safer routes for them to cycle from the city centre to the main Frenchay Campus. We also noted that 95% of them reported a positive or very positive impact on their cycling confidence, with the remaining 5% being a neutral impact.

The impact to the students was an increased confidence of how to cycle safely on the busy city roads, and the knowledge of which route is the quickest [and easiest] to get from the university campus to the city centre. We also used the opportunity to talk to them about other events going on throughout the year, and more importantly the cheapest and most accessible ways of getting a hire bike for free or very low cost. We then followed up with participants after the event with some targeted communications about local events and information on how they could continue to be involved. This included guided cycle rides, mechanical check-up workshops, commuting challenges and infrastructure on campus such as the cycle hubs, showers and lockers.

The project has created opportunities for further engagement events similar to this to have a wider reach. We plan to hold the next event in May 2018, aimed predominantly at staff. We will also hold further events throughout September aimed at targeting Freshers or new students to the city. It is a great way to introduce them to cycling in a safe environment whilst also helping them get to know the city they are in.

What would you do differently if you could?

The first challenges were understanding how the Yo Bikes worked! The staff member leading the event was not so tech savvy and so having a more experience colleague on hand to support was incredibly helpful. Additionally, understanding the variety in speeds at which students could cycle was very eye opening. We had expected to be able to remain in one or two groups, however there was a huge variance between the fastest riders and the slowest! Inevitably, we split into two groups but had we involved more volunteer ride leaders who knew the route and stops – we could have split into even smaller groups as the ride went along.



Our advice to people replicating this event:

- Plan the stops and let the eateries know you are coming – it helps them plan and they may even offer something free for promoting their business on your website and social media channels.
- For every five riders have a ride leader who is a confident cyclist that knows how to fix the bikes that the students are riding, knows the route and the stops! They can then go off at the pace of their group. It makes it more fun as you may catch up or pass other groups at various stops!

- Have a Plan B – if you are with a slower group make sure you know your 'crucial hit stops' and the places you could miss out if you are running out of time!
- Provide each participant with the ride leader's mobile number and a list of where the stops are just in case anyone gets separated.
- If you are not doing a 'loop' ride and students may finish their cycle at a different location to the start – make sure they get back safely.
- Follow up the event virtually with information about local bike events, ways they can access bikes for free or at low cost and facilities at the university campus for cyclists.

What's next?

The success of the project was really down to the marketing, and the message that was sold as fun! The ride leader really sold the event as a relaxing afternoon about getting to know the local area and eateries. The focus was purely on getting out there and trying something new be that riding a bike or eating something different!

We will continue to deliver this event to various target audiences across the university. We hope to reinforce this with further engagement events such as cycle training, free breakfast for cyclists and cycling proficiency training courses.

More information

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