

Case Study

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC)

*"Sustainable transport and the Workplace Health and Well-being form an integral part of UWIC life. Over the past few years UWIC staff have been encouraged to participate in a number of initiatives which promote both green travel and a healthy lifestyle. Since starting initiatives like the bike and walk to work weeks in 2007 we have seen **a significant reduction in sickness absence rates across the university**, suggesting that the implementation of such initiatives can and is having a positive impact upon both the University and the staff that work within it"*

Stuart Scott - Chair of the Work place Health and Well-being Promotion Group

UWIC hosts almost 10,000 students and 1360 staff based at four campuses around Cardiff. The university has achieved impressive results in changing travel behaviour over recent years including increasing the number of people walking and cycling. There has been a tangible reduction in campus traffic congestion and in sickness absence rates as a result of these initiatives.



Travel planning began at the university in 1997, looking at how staff and students travelled to and between the campuses. Early interventions included the introduction of a local bus service to the campuses, and the launch of the UWIC Rider bus pass, which also offers unlimited access to the Cardiff Bus network between September and June. Subscription to the scheme has grown year on year, with 2,100 students purchasing a pass in 2008/09; and 3000 journeys being made on the service per week.

"As part of our sustainable transport and health and well being initiatives I have been using the bus for the majority of my journeys to work and I have thoroughly enjoyed doing so. It is a simple way of integrating more exercise into my everyday routines and I have not missed using the car at all. In fact I think the additional exercise is quite stress-reducing"

Pam Ackroyd – Director of Operations

Interventions to promote sustainable travel at the university have also focussed strongly on staff travel, in particular on encouraging staff to walk and cycle. The university prioritises the promotion of active travel, knowing the health benefits that walking and cycling can bring to staff in addition to helping deliver the travel plan targets.

Active travel initiatives have included adopting the salary sacrifice bike purchase scheme (through which over 5% of staff purchased a bike in 2009), and regular promotional events. Over 100 staff cycled to work during each of four 'bike breakfast' weeks, during which staff are rewarded for travelling by bike with a free breakfast. Feedback from staff indicates that this initiative has had good results in terms of people continuing to cycle during the rest of the year.

"During 2009 I decided to walk to work at Llandaff Campus rather than taken my car. It was only a 40 minute along the Taff Trail and I would normally arrive earlier than if I had brought my car. I found the whole experience far less stressful and I arrived at work awake and ready for the day. On the plus side I helped the environment, lost weight and it saved me having to go to the gym after work!"

Rachel Luke – Internal Communications Officer

Additionally, Menna Hawkins (UWIC's travel plan assistant) is qualified as a National Standards cycling instructor, and regularly runs cycle safety sessions throughout the academic year for staff and students. Menna also buddies new active commuters on their first few times cycling to work to help with route planning and increasing their confidence.

"I decided to cycle to work for the Bike2Work Week and from this experience I have now cancelled my parking fee and am cycling to work instead. I found that from where I live it is actually much quicker for me to get to work during the heavy traffic times (it has taken as long as 40 minutes sometimes, whereas the bike takes 12 minutes). I also know that the exercise everyday will be good for me, and as I always try and keep fit, this is an extra way."

Jen Perry – Clerk to the Governors Office.

Neil Woollacott, Student Accommodation Manager, has led on many of the initiatives. "We are really lucky with our campus locations - Llandaff in particular is located right on Route 8 of the National Cycle Network, the traffic free Taff Trail section. People can be in the centre of Cardiff from the site within 15 minutes on a bike, so we are very keen to continue promoting both walking and cycling. It's important we support this with improved facilities as well, so we have been installing improved cycle storage on site - these are already full, so we've plans to install even more!''.

The investment that UWIC have made in improving facilities for cyclists as well as in providing the UWIC Rider scheme have been made possible by the introduction of a nominal fee for parking at all campuses. Students currently pay £1 per day, whilst staff members contribute £10 per month for a parking permit. Whilst these charges are low enough to be affordable, they have provided a vital income stream for investing in practical interventions, hugely increasing the success of the travel plan's aims.

A pair of pool bikes has been purchased and a scheme launched at the school of Art and Design; a further six bikes have been purchased and are about to be launched for use across the other campuses. Future plans at the university include improving the signposting from campuses to local cycle routes, improving the bike access to the Llandaff campus and a new bus service connecting the student halls with Tesco (Tesco Tuesdays). UWIC have received funding through the Cardiff Sustainable Travel Centre workplace funding stream; 'Keeping Cardiff Moving' for these site improvements.

"We are thrilled with the way staff and students around UWIC have enthusiastically taken part in all of our green travel initiatives, with the majority of people making permanent changes to the way they travel to work. It is great to see that all of the hard work and effort that UWIC has put into our sustainable transport initiatives is paying off, and we have been very appreciative for all of the advice and support that we have received from Sustrans, which has been invaluable"