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Bristol invites public to imagine, and then decide on, the future of their city

Language English

There is no one path to realising more sustainable mobility, as evident by the wide-variety of transport measures on offer that can lower emissions, reduce pollution and create greener urban areas. But with limited budgets and the knowledge that infrastructural change can majorly alter the character of a city, how should local leaders prioritise one measure over another? And how can citizens be involved in this decision making process, granting them a real sense of ownership over the process?

To address these concerns, Bristol has developed an online space where citizens can view and discuss sustainability measures.

'Future Bristol' is a website that presents potential options for enhancing the sustainability of the city, and asks visitors to vote on their preferred choices. The measures are grouped into two scenarios, each featuring a different mix of low carbon measures, technology and infrastructure. The animated interface allows visitors to visualise the final outcomes of each scenario, with further information available by clicking on the various cartoon elements of the city.

Mobility issues addressed in Scenario X include increasing the availability of charging stations for electric vehicles, introducing ticketless 'smart cards' for low emission buses, and investing in a high-speed electrified rail to link with other areas of Europe.

Scenario Y looks at the feasibility of car clubs, and the idea of introducing car-free zones and congestion charging. Methods of enhancing public transport, and encouraging walking and cycling are also outlined.

The website is a means to start a discussion regarding the future of Bristol. It also gives visitors the option to share their own ideas on the direction the city should take, fostering an open and inclusive approach to decision-making.

Wide-spread promotion of the site has taken place through social media, at local events and festivals, through school visits, and via citizen journalism competitions. The site will form part of Bristol's European Green Capital activities in 2015.

The innovative website is the brainchild of Dr. Rose Bailey, who developed the site in conjunction with Bristol City Council and the Centre for Sustainable Energy.

Dr. Rose's research aimed to explore how the Bristol city region might achieve its 2050 carbon reduction target of 80 percent: "Moving around the site reveals information about features of the two pictures [of Bristol], with the ability to vote and comment on them. The aim is to engage and raise awareness about what a low carbon future means for the city, and find out how the Bristol public feel about two different potential futures: which features are desirable and which we want to avoid."

"The intention is that this website will start a public discussion about how Bristol can become a low carbon city, helping to shape the future we would like by providing valuable evidence to inform local policy."

The site has already won several awards, including the [CSS Design Award](#) and the [Smashing Award](#). For more information on Bristol's use of the website to encourage public participation, read the [Eltis case study](#).



Topic:
Urban mobility planning

Country:
United Kingdom
