

**MAKE IT PERSONAL**

**Lessons learnt from successful business engagement in Derby**

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## **1. ABSTRACT**

In summer 2012, Derby City Council was awarded a £4.9 million grant through the Department for Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) for a comprehensive programme of sustainable travel initiatives in the south-east quadrant of the city. The 'Connected' programme was introduced in 2013 to inspire, advise and support businesses and local employees to encourage greater uptake of sustainable travel options. Integrated Transport Planning ITP collaborated with the City Council's in-house team to help shape the programme, develop the Connected brand, define an offer for businesses, and engage local employers through a Travel Advice Service (TAS).

This paper shares key lessons we learned about building effective relationship marketing and social marketing approaches that are tailored for different local employers, in order to positively influence and maintain support for sustainable commuting and business travel. Our team of travel advisers used these techniques to establish a network of over 200 employers, covering more than 33,000 staff. We helped each one to develop a Travel Action Plan and implement sustainable travel initiatives to encourage more people to walk, cycle, car share, and use public transport regularly. Independent monitoring and evaluation revealed a 6% point average reduction in drive alone commuting trips, with an estimated 5.4m fewer miles driven and 1.66m fewer tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e emitted per annum, across a sample of 10 major employers as a result of our interventions.

The purpose of this paper is to disseminate good practice of how to not only gain the initial support of local businesses, but also how to maintain their interest and momentum in promoting sustainable travel. The findings offer recommendation for future behaviour change campaigns and will be of interest to smarter travel project managers and business engagement teams.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2012 Derby City Council (DCC) was awarded a £4.9 million grant through the Department for Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) for a comprehensive programme of sustainable travel initiatives in the south-east quadrant of the city. The 'Connected' programme was introduced in 2013 to inspire, advise and support businesses and local employees to encourage greater uptake of sustainable travel options.

In March 2014 Connected successfully applied for further funding and was awarded another £960,000 to continue delivering initiatives in 2015/16.



The *Connected* programme sought to support Derby's Local Transport Plan (LTP3) goals and vision by:

- Tackling peak hour congestion to reduce the impact that this has on both the environment in terms of carbon emissions and the economy in terms of the viability of the key regeneration sites; and
- Maximising accessibility by sustainable modes to key regeneration sites to ensure that people can get into work and that Derby's employers have good access to a local workforce.

A key part of the Connected programme involved working with employers and other key stakeholders in the target area to encourage their employees to adopt and embed sustainable travel habits when travelling to and from work and when travelling on business. This complements other parts of the programme which seek to improve infrastructure and remove barriers for sustainable modes such as walking, cycling, car sharing and bus use.

### 1.1 Business engagement within the Connected programme

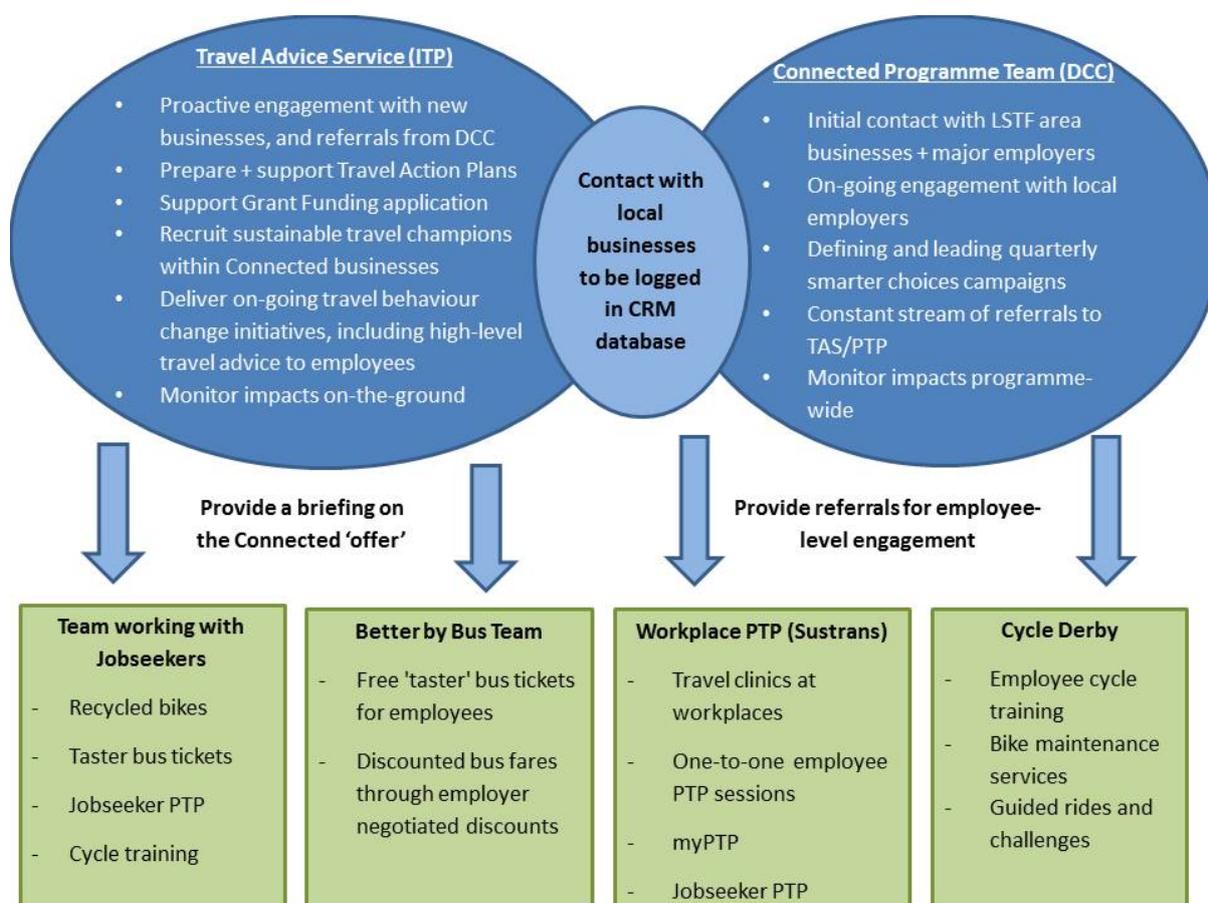
The Travel Advice Service (TAS) project represents a cornerstone of the behavioural change initiative within the Connected programme in Derby. ITP provided the Travel Advice Service and the approach adopted was built on sound research of behaviour change theories and social marketing principles. TAS provided ongoing direct engagement role during the lifetime of the programme, primarily involving personal direct contact with employees through businesses and other employers. Its key functions was to promote and support delivery of the Connected 'offer' directly to employers, employees and individuals in Derby.

Travel Advisers acted as both delivery and referral agents for Connected programme materials and campaigns to support behavioural change. The dedicated team of Travel Advisers provided both a means of delivering Connected programme materials, incentives and communication messages and a source of referral to specific Connected programme incentives and opportunities. This approach allowed businesses to be referred by the Connected programme team for support from the Travel Advisers and for the TAS to refer

businesses to other Connected programme initiatives such as Personal Travel Planning (PTP), bus ticket initiatives, guided rides and cycle maintenance.

TAS sat at the heart of a number of the programmes elements and interacted with a number of people involved in delivering these as well as DCC Connected staff members. This is illustrated in figure 1. This interaction is important to recognise and assisted TAS in successfully providing an attractive offer for businesses in return of pledging their commitment to sustainable transport.

**Figure 1: Roles and Responsibilities**



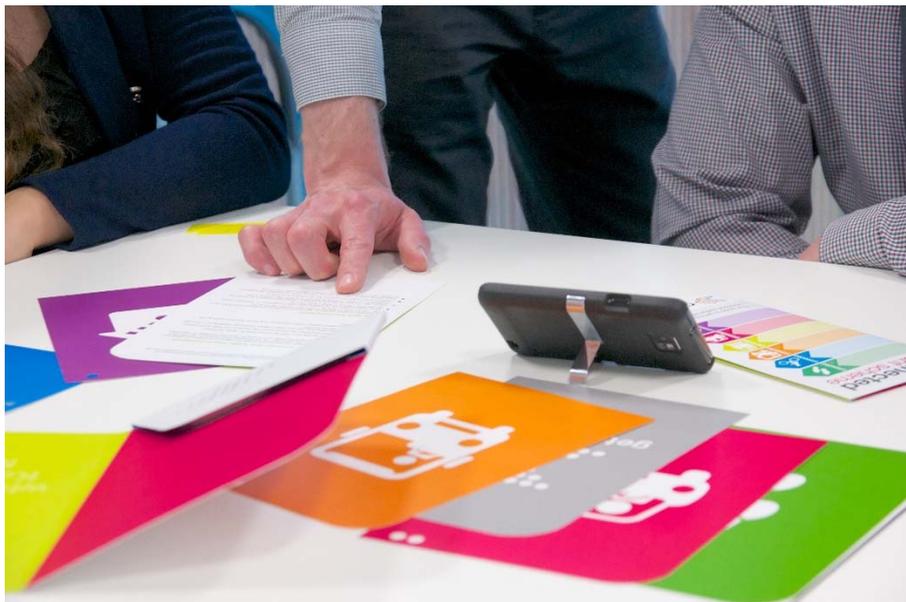
## 1.2 Connected Offer

Joining the Connected Business Network was free, easy and unlocked tangible offers and incentives for employers and employees. TAS's friendly, adaptive and positively-led engagement approach to businesses ensured they could recruit and inspire sustainable travel champions in businesses who will promote sustainable travel options, and LSTF initiatives, to employees at their own organisations. This personal touch to business engagement allowed Travel Advisers to build rapport with each travel champion and encourage them to continue to promote sustainable travel to their colleagues.

TAS personally worked with travel champions at each business to develop an agreed travel action plan which included specific measures designed to encourage more sustainable travel choices for staff commuting and business travel. A business travel information pack including the offers available to business were provided to travel champions. A number of these measures outlined in the travel pack were delivered at workplaces across the business network and included:

- High quality public transport, walking and cycling information and journey advice;
- Promotion of ticket offers and discounts on public transport;
- Workplace challenges;
- Setting-up of cycle to work schemes;
- Sustainable travel workplace facilities improvements through business grants e.g. Cycle parking, shower facilities, changing rooms and lockers; and
- ‘Dr. Bike’ cycle repair surgeries

**Figure 2: Business travel information pack**



The following section of this paper will focus upon how relationship marketing and social marketing techniques enabled TAS to successfully engage and support businesses and developed a network of businesses that pledged their commitment to sustainable transport.

## **2. OUR APPROACH TO INFLUENCING BEHAVIOUR CHANGE**

Social marketing is about changing people's behaviour for a social good. It is not about increasing awareness or knowledge, it is about achieving behavioural change. We can use social marketing to change the behaviour of individuals and wider society. One such way is to use social marketing to influence health behaviour (e.g. stop smoking, eat more healthily or use sustainable travel).

When applied effectively, social marketing can be a powerful tool to change behaviours. Importantly, the effectiveness of the social marketing can be measured, allowing for targeted and specific interventions or initiatives. The economic output can also be measured, vital when justifying the spending of public money. The Government is increasingly recognising the potential value of social marketing and how it can improve the impact and effectiveness of behavioural interventions.

The introduction of the LSTF offered the opportunity for local authorities to harness the power of social marketing which underpins the TAS, a key component of Derby's LSTF programme. This allowed TAS to innovatively engage and support local businesses and their employees to make sustainable travel choices.

Before we begin to explore how TAS constructed a locally relevant engagement technique, it is important to put behaviour change campaigns into context by providing a brief overview of the factors that influence behaviour change and explain how they can be used to inspire pro-social behaviour such as sustainable transport.

### **2.1 Understanding what influences behaviour**

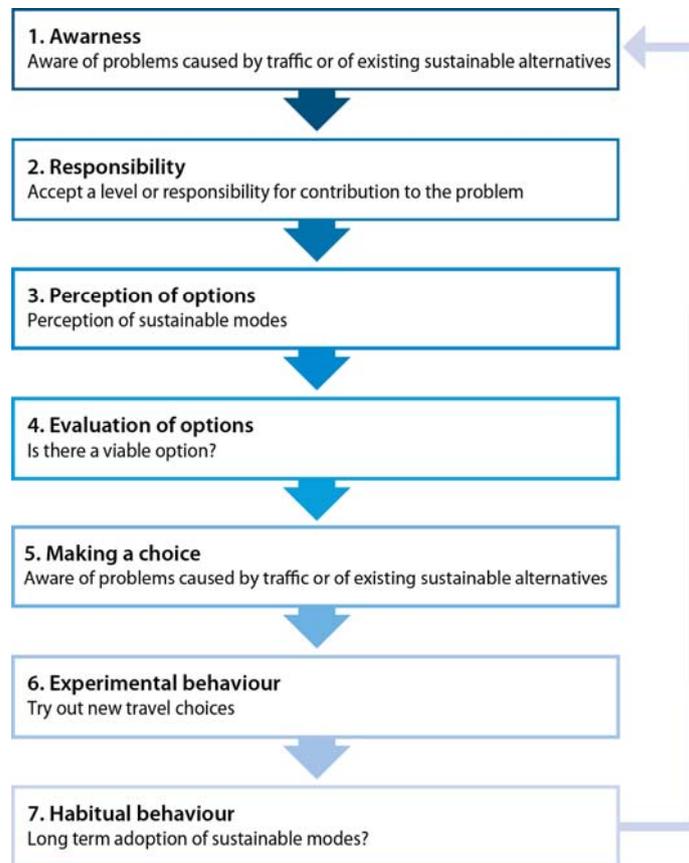
Within the health, education, economics and psychology sectors, research has been carried out to gain an understanding of how behaviour is learnt and why some types of behaviour, such as travel to work, become habitual. Each behavioural change theory or model focuses on different factors but elements such as self-efficacy (belief in one's own ability); perception (personal or social attitude to a behaviour) and reinforcement (motivates and incentivises) are common to several theories.

Transport & Travel Research Ltd. (2003) developed the 'Seven Stages of Change' model which attempts to set out the stages in the process of changing travel behaviour and incorporates the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and the Trans-theoretical Model (Prochaska and Marcus, 1994). These can be summarised as follows:

- Theory of Planned Behaviour: is concerned with the links between beliefs and behaviour and the factors which impede or facilitate specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).
- Trans-theoretical model: is an integrative model of behaviour change focusing on the readiness to act on new healthier behaviour (Prochaska and Marcus, 1994).

The seven stages illustrated in Figure 3 shows a change in travel behaviour as an outcome of the process and feeds back from habitual behaviour to awareness of the issues.

**Figure 3: Seven Stages of Change model (Transport & Travel Research Ltd., 2003)**



To reach beyond awareness and knowledge of the problem, persuasive marketing techniques can be used to influence an individual's travel behaviour choices. Cialdini's (2009) theory of influence is based on six key principles: reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, authority, liking, scarcity. These can be summarised and related to sustainable travel as follows:

- Reciprocity - offer something in direct return for their commitment to the programme.
- Consistency - ensure the programme meets the corporate social responsibility and environmental objectives of each workplace targeted.
- Social Proof - demonstrate how other similar businesses are engaging and supporting the programme.
- Authority - senior level employees will support the programme.
- Liking - a business community will be nurtured and work together on joint initiatives of common interest.
- Scarcity - offer a time limited incentive to join (i.e. availability of grant funding).

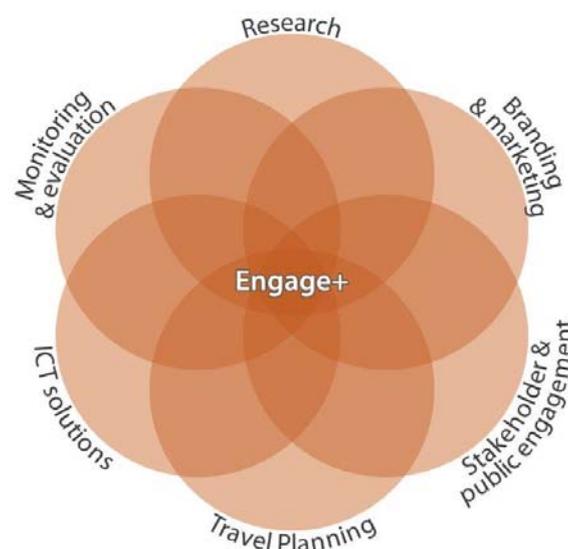
Understanding what influences travel behaviour provides the foundations for our business engagement approach. Another key component of our approach is the benefits of marketing theories, these will be discussed next in the context of business engagement.

## 2.2 Business engagement

Social marketing is an approach developed to change behaviour, to benefit individuals and the greater social good. In the context of sustainable travel, social marketing focuses on the specific barriers people encounter which may lead to them choosing not to travel sustainably, even though they may have aspirations to do so.

ITP's business engagement techniques have been refined as a result of years of experience in delivering campaigns and interventions with public and private sector organisations. Social marketing forms a pivotal role in achieving effective business engagement. ITP's approach known as 'Engage+' is centred on the most relevant components of the 'principles of persuasion' and the 'theory of behaviour change' to build an engagement approach that appeals to the target market.

**Figure 4: ITP's Business engagement approach – Engage +**



Engage+ takes a personal approach to delivering a behaviour change campaign and is strengthened through valuable insight into the challenges organisations face when promoting sustainable travel options. This ensures that business needs are at the heart of the overall processes we deploy in building a network of engaged workplaces.

Building a business engagement network incorporates three key stages including:

1. *Preparation*: understanding the businesses needs and desires prior to meeting the organisation. This included discussions with DCC and delivery partners to understand the local context.

2. *Engagement*: securing senior level buy-in and staff support. This involved building a direct personal point of contact with the business through face-to-face meetings, emails and telephone calls.
3. *Maintenance*: recruiting and inspiring a dedicated travel plan co-ordinator to promote sustainable travel at their workplace. This included implementing specific measures outlined in the agreed travel action plan to encourage more sustainable travel choices amongst colleagues.

This is aided by simplifying the process of developing a Travel Plan, so that the notes of a meeting and staff responses to a standardised travel to work survey could be used to define an achievable near-term list of objective and actions.

### **2.3 Relationship Marketing – Making it personal**

Relationship marketing formed the heart of the Connected programme and was considered throughout the whole programme from preparation, to business engagement and support, to travel champions independently promoting sustainable at their workplace.

Relationship marketing is about establishing, developing and maintaining a successful relationship with the target audience. It seeks to build a good long-term relationship rather than simply targeting people with a series of interventions. Building trust and gaining commitment from individual organisations was key for our successful business engagement approach in Derby.

TAS used relationship marketing techniques to build strong relationships with individual businesses and to tie-in businesses support for promoting sustainable travel. These techniques helped TAS to work closely with each business to overcome the barriers to sustainable travel and to understand their site-specific challenges and assist them with formulating travel initiatives that work.

Relationship marketing theory allowed us to identify, develop and nurture all businesses to ensure they would receive maximum support from TAS. A two tier personal business engagement approach was adopted which allowed businesses to opt for a 'light touch' support option as an alternative to our traditional more intense structured sustainable travel support. This 'light touch' option focuses more on providing relevant information rather than requiring full engagement from the businesses and is often applied when working with retail stores, food outlets and restaurants which form part of larger organisations and where staff turn-over is high.

TAS engaged 252 businesses across a range of sectors and of varying sizes (including: food outlets and restaurants, retailers, manufacturers, hospitals and professional services at multinational, regional and SME level).

## 2.4 Co-ordinate workplace events

Once a business is engaged, the aim is to maintain their commitment and enthusiasm for promoting sustainable travel by offering them additional support, incentives and where applicable workplace travel clinics, events and challenges.

The bi-directional referrals process between the TAS team and other Connected programme delivery partners (including: Sustrans, Cycle Derby, Wheels to Work and Bike Back Derby) strengthened communication between partners. This enabled TAS to supply local businesses with tailored travel events hosted in communal staff areas, such as canteen and receptions. Promotional materials including e-shots, posters and leaflets were developed and provided for each event, this helped to build momentum for sustainable travel in the workplace prior to the event.

## 3. MAINTAINING THE NETWORK

Maintaining a business network is no easy task but with the right mix of multi-media communication, engagement and marketing techniques it can be achieved successfully. Behaviour change guidance often warns about the challenges of sustaining long-term businesses interest, particularly with increasing workloads and other work commitments which often take priority. It is at this stage that relationship marketing is paramount and can help to maintain momentum and retain businesses initial enthusiasm and commitment towards sustainable travel.

As the Connected team created the business network they built an effective relationship with each travel plan co-ordinator through regular communication including: direct contact - in person; by phone or e-mail; regular newsletters and social media updates. The aim at the end of the project was for the business network to be self-sustaining and for best practice to be shared between businesses.

Figure 5: Selection of businesses involved in Derby Connected



### **3.1 Communication**

Marketing communications is a critical part of social marketing and is effective at focusing the delivery of a behaviour change campaigns. Derby Connected applied the following social marketing principles to achieve effective marketing of the programme to local employers and employees (Alden, Basil and Deshpande, 2011):

- Brand promise is promoted consistency e.g. DCC developed a travel information pack for all delivery partners to use when promoting the programme.
- Promotion – integrated within product (offer and incentives available to business), price (free to sign up to the business network) and place (take the product directly to the employers and employees).
- Communication – encourage pro-social behaviour (actions that benefit individuals and society as a whole) through social media and personal contact with travel champions.

Personal communication was also given careful consideration throughout the programme, it was particularly paramount for maintaining the business network. The rapport with travel champions helped to maintain direct contact with each business acted as a nudge to encourage continued promotion of initiatives.

Brand building is another powerful tool to ‘normalise’ sustainable travel for the target audience. In the case of Derby Connected an array of activities including tailored travel information and leaflets, targeted business engagement and workplace events (e.g. personalised travel planning, cycle MOT and cycle training) helped to promote and mainstream sustainable travel options throughout the programme.

To supplement the direct communication social media increased awareness through channels such as Facebook and Twitter. Social media can be used as a tactic to building brand awareness and instantly interact with the target audience. Its platforms helped to raise the profile of Derby’s LSTF programme amongst local employees and employers. Seasonally themed campaigns relevant to the Connected programme were promoted through social media (including Facebook and Twitter) to build momentum around specific travel options (e.g. ‘Catch The Bus Week’; ‘Cycle To Work Day’; and ‘Walk To Work Day’).

A timely e-newsletter was also sent out every quarter to travel champions to provide updates on new incentives, up-coming events and challenges they could get involved in (with their support of their employer). It also provided an opportunity to share businesses recent achievements and efforts that promoted sustainable travel options in the workplace.

### **3.2 Accreditation and awards**

Encouraging sustainable travel is not just about enhancing the environment, reducing costs and improving operational efficiency. In fact, from a business point of view, sustainability is

mainly about securing the long term business success. Accreditation can enhance a business corporate image and corporate social responsibility by recognising their commitment to reducing their environmental impact.

To motivate business to continue to update their travel plan and promote sustainable travel in the workplace, a four tier accreditation scheme was developed. The scheme was simple, effective and achievable. Businesses attained the first stage of accreditation by joining the 'Connected Business Network' and expressing an interest in receiving sustainable travel support. Businesses could work through the tiers by implementing the measures outlined in their travel action plan until they reached a 'gold standard'. To reach a gold standard a reduction in solo car use for staff commuting trips needed to be recorded at their site, as well as introducing a whole host of sustainable travel measures.



Each spring Connected reviewed the achievements of all the businesses involved in the Connected business network and the four levels of accreditation were used to recognise achievements at the annual Connected Business Awards. Four additional special awards were awarded for Travel Planning excellence these included:

- Small Business site of the Year (less than 250 people)
- Large Business Site of the Year (more than 250 people)
- Initiative of the Year
- Travel Champion of the Year

**Figure 6: Derby Connected Award winners (2015)**



The annual awards events not only creates an opportunity for businesses to network and share ideas but to inspire one another. The element of friendly competition also motivates business to work towards attaining the next accreditation level.

### **3.4 Monitoring and evaluation**

Transport for Quality of Life carried out independent monitoring and evaluation of Derby Connected in 2016. Their work revealed a 6% point average reduction in drive alone commuting trips, with an estimated 5.4m fewer miles driven and 1.66m fewer tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e emitted per annum, across a sample of 10 major employers as a result of interventions from TAS's personalised business engagement.

## **4. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The success of the Derby Connect project is built on the foundations of sound planning and research. We took the most relevant components of various behaviour change theories (including the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Principles of Persuasion) and social marketing and relationship marketing principles to construct a locally relevant engagement technique that we felt would maximise business support for the project. The Connected experience can offer recommendation for future behaviour change campaigns specifically relating to achieving a successful business engagement approach and establishing and maintain a business network. Recommendations include:

### *Business Engagement:*

- Once a business is engaged ensure that delivery partners follow up immediately to sustain the businesses interest.
- Understand perceived barriers to promoting sustainable travel in the workplace.
- Do background research and utilise any pre-existing travel behaviour data
- Simply explain what the project is aiming to do and how the business can benefit.
- Make it easy for businesses to take part (e.g. brief business survey)
- The grant funding scheme has been popular and is often seen as a key element of the offer from a business perspective. Secure cycle parking and shower and changing facilities have been the most popular facilities installed at workplaces to encourage sustainable travel amongst their employees. In the future online grant application would help speed up the process from a business perspective.
- Offer tangible incentives to encourage business and their employees to join and take up programme offers (E.g. bus taster tickets, free cycle MOT, personalised travel planning, onsite travel clinics etc.).
- Adopt a two tier business engagement approach; a light touch approach is suitable for some businesses while other require more intensive support.
- Effective communication is essential, work with each individual business to establish the best lines of communication (face-to-face, e-mail, phone or meetings). Many

retailers do not have e-mail access in the workplace and may also prefer to receive hard copies of information.

- Travel challenges are a great way to sustain interest with employers and employees.
- Consider building in legacy measures from the outset to ensure that local employers are able to independently promote, encourage and support their staff to travel by sustainable modes and reduce their car dependency
- A successful travel clinic engages with employees and helps to sustain interest in sustainable travel.

#### *Business Network:*

- Communication between local businesses is important, this allows them to work together and share best practise. In the future the Travel Plan forum and Sustainable Transport Partnership could become a platform to facilitate and encourage knowledge sharing across businesses.
- The accreditation scheme and Connected Business Awards encourages businesses to take part in the programmes initiatives and drives them to achieve a higher level of accreditation.
- A monthly newsletter is important to sustain contact and engagement with businesses.
- Share case studies of business in the network to promote good practice.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This paper has shown how to successfully promote sustainable travel through effective business engagement, utilising social marketing and building a business network. It has highlighted the importance of understanding what influences travel behaviour and choices and know these can be positively changed for the benefit of the employee, the employer, the environment, the economy and society as a whole.

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