

The year of living sustainably

Only a month to go and Bristol will be Europe's Green Capital. The city's bid demonstrated 40 years of environmental efforts with real progress in areas such as food, travel, energy and waste. **George Ferguson**, the Mayor of Bristol, gives **Dagmar Köhler** an insight into the role transport plays in a sustainable city region, attitudes towards changes in the transport system and why international cooperation has been a major pillar of Bristol's path to success



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Bristol has been selected as the Green Capital of Europe 2015 – congratulations! What does it mean to you and for Bristol to be the Green Capital next year?

It means a huge amount, but we must ensure that it touches everyone's lives in the city. We are determined that all Bristol's communities and diverse cultures reap the benefits of the environmental initiatives and the increased attention and funding that we have secured for the Green Capital programme during 2015. There are strong existing networks between local communities. We shall work to empower people to ensure that the value of sustainable living is delivered across Bristol.

What role does a city's transport system play in it becoming a sustainable city, and ultimately to be awarded the Green Capital of Europe?

It is a vital one that makes a major contribution to the bigger picture of a healthy and sustainable city. Bristol is a complex, historic city making transport connections especially challenging. There is no simple solution to an unacceptably high level of congestion. We must pursue a flexible but high

performing public transport network, encouragement of active transport in the form of walking and cycling, and a 'carrot and stick' approach to entice people out of their cars, and to share them, if we are to have streets that are no longer clogged with traffic, and air that is safe to breathe.

So is congestion is your major transport challenge? How will you tackle it in the future?

Bristol is a medium sized historic city with a high number of car commuters from a relatively prosperous city region – over 50,000 every day. The sad fact is that 9 out of 10 of these cars are occupied by a single person. This contributes to congestion – a major issue and cost for Bristol. Steps we've taken to minimise disruption include promoting mode change through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and joint travel plans with neighbouring authorities, increasing capacity at our three park and ride sites and pioneering a new code of conduct with utilities in the city to improve co-ordination of planned roadworks. We're also rolling out Residents' Parking Schemes to many areas, implementing city-wide 20mph (32km/h) limits and investing hugely in the

George Ferguson, Mayor of Bristol

George Ferguson is the first elected mayor of Bristol since 2012, succeeding Bristol's former system of Lord Mayors – a civic and ceremonial role. Ferguson is the only independent to lead a major city in Britain, following a career as an architect, environmental campaigner and social entrepreneur. He has a broad variety of experience in urban regeneration, including founding his own theatre and brewery. Ferguson is Past President of the Royal Institute of British Architects (2003/5) and co-founder of the UK based Academy of Urbanism (2006). He led the team that secured Bristol the title of European Green Capital 2015 and is raising the profile of Bristol across the world as one of Europe's most liveable and creative cities.



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infrastructure for active travel options like cycling and walking and for better public transport.

Bristol's transport policy is encapsulated in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) that sets out the strategy from 2011 to 2026 and includes the four neighbouring municipalities. What useful experiences have you gleaned from working across municipal boundaries for transport planning?

Developing joint transport strategies with neighbouring authorities is essential if we are to reduce congestion and its cost to the local economy. The £200m (€255m) MetroBus programme, combined with park and ride is a major part of that, funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) with local contributions from the three councils involved, but we could benefit from an integrated transport authority, such as exists in London.

Our £80million investment in the Greater Bristol Bus Network, alongside the MetroBus scheme and MetroWest rail network, form the basis of a much cleaner, smarter, more connected transport system than currently exists. MetroBus has been designed to link and connect with existing rail and bus services.

My message to all cities is that we need to work as city regions to tackle poor transport. Bicycle loans and training programmes should be expanded along with taster bus tickets, smart ticketing, and travel planning advice to encourage use of other forms of transport.

Part of Bristol's Local Transport Plan (LTP) is to change the travel culture by promoting walking and cycling. Have you calculated the health benefits of the doubled modal share for cycling?

This is work that is well underway, along with a wide-reaching Mayoral Commission on Air Quality which will report in early 2015. What we do know is that the invisible occurrence of death linked directly with emissions from vehicles on our roads is significantly more than the very visible deaths caused by motor accidents. The cost to health services as a result is estimated to be up to £100m a year, making active transport an absolute priority in economic terms alone.



Park & Rides schemes have made a major contribution to tackling congestion; Bristol's involvement in the national Cycle to Work scheme is part of its Local Transport Plan; The city has doubled the number of cyclists over the last few years





How did Bristol convince the jury and become the Green Capital of Europe 2015?

Bristol is located in South West England and has a population of approximately 450,000 (nearly 600,000 in the metropolitan area). Bristol has implemented a long-term commitment to improving the environment in the city. Carbon emissions have been reduced by 15 per cent (2005-2010), despite a growing economy. This made Bristol the lowest emitter of the eight major English cities outside London.

Bristol's local road transport system is responsible for 27 per cent of the city's energy use and 20 per cent of the city's CO₂ emissions, producing 1 tonne per capita. Bristol has doubled the number of cyclists in recent years and is committed to doubling this number again by 2020 compared to 2010. Bristol has the ambition of becoming a European hub for low-carbon industry and demonstrated nearly 5 per cent growth in the green economy in 2012.

The city has committed a budget of €500m for transport improvements by 2015 and up to €300m for energy efficiency and renewable energy by 2020. The city is determined to make Bristol one of the most liveable and environmentally friendly cities in Europe.

Many cities face opposition against measures perceived to be threatening drivers. Do you have the support of citizens to make Bristol's transport system more sustainable?

I think I do in general, although the noise from some drivers might indicate otherwise! New transport measures will always be controversial and there has been some opposition to the introduction of 20mph limits in the city but also considerable parent and other support. I am determined that we continue to work with local communities to make our neighbourhoods safer and healthier places and have carried out an extensive consultation with local residents on the rollout of Bristol's 20mph zones with very positive returns.

There are proven safety and noise benefits to residential areas of reducing speed to 20mph. Research shows that the real impact on journey times for drivers is remarkably small but sometimes that is difficult to convince those who rush between junctions!

Carbon emissions have been reduced in Bristol by 15 per cent between 2005 and 2010. Does this include significant reduction of emissions originating from passenger and freight transport?

Measuring carbon emissions originating solely from transport across the city would require a major project and resources although it is apparent we are leaders in air quality measurement and in October we were proud to host an international masterclass on urban air quality in the run up to our year as Green Capital of Europe.

This event brought together policymakers, air quality experts, academics and practitioners to identify and explore current challenges. What we've learnt will help us put together a collective report to the European Commission on the experiences and opportunities for air quality management in European cities. Research by TRL has indicated that the use of generic cycles in calculating emissions may underestimate real emissions as the drive cycles do not take account of aggressive driving in real world situations.

The freight consolidation centre is a start in terms of reducing the impact of deliveries into the city, but until it is adopted by the major supermarkets and others it will not have a significant impact on air pollution reduction in the city. I would like to be able to take stronger action on this front.

Bristol is well-connected on the European level and beyond, including involvement in CIVITAS, city networks and non-European partner cities. What



Whether it's these smaller ideas or thinking about large scale partnerships, our cross-border cooperation opens up all sorts of doors

makes cross-border cooperation so valuable for Bristol?

When I came into office I was very clear that we needed to think more broadly and make the most of the funding, learning and good practice that the world has to offer. One of my early initiatives was opening up city centre streets to people on certain Sundays and closing them to vehicles, an idea borrowed from Bordeaux and Bogota, which has been a tremendous success in opening people's eyes to the possibilities.

Whether it's these smaller ideas or thinking about large-scale partnerships, our cross-border cooperation opens up all sorts of doors and helps put Bristol on the international map, something which is absolutely vital as a modern city which is a world leader in creative, green and smart industries.

For example we're piloting the successful US concept of Cities of Service in the UK, we've joined the Polis network, are one of The Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities and are benefiting from a variety of European funding. The European relationship is incredibly important, particularly as Bristol is Green Capital for 2015. We've recognised this recently by appointing our first permanent representative in Brussels.

Has the concept of 'Smart Cities' caught Bristol's attention?

Absolutely. We were a runner-up in bidding for Government funding, securing £3m which we're putting to good use. We've opened up over 100 data sets to enable people to develop. These data sets include real-time air quality readings and traffic speeds across the city.

Our aspirations go much further, such as our bid to pilot driverless cars in the city on the basis that if they work here they can work anywhere! We are also working on a fascinating project with the University of Bristol to trial superfast and experimental connectivity technologies as a living test-bed. We are making use of a network of ducts to install fibre to link up schools, community centres and local businesses. We want to invite hi-tech companies to use the network to develop technologies that require



huge amounts of bandwidth – essentially challenging people to try things in a live environment. Meanwhile, as one of the cities awarded a share of the Government's Urban Broadband Fund, 'Gigabit Bristol' will improve broadband speeds for up to thousands of small businesses.

On the green agenda we've got a huge amount happening, including setting up our own energy company, retro-fitting our own housing stock with renewable technologies and opening a council-owned wind farm. It's a very exciting time for Bristol as a laboratory for urban change. 🌱

**Bristol's
Enterprise zone**

FYI

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<http://www.polisnetwork.eu/members/9/26/Bristol/>