

December 2009

# walkit.com

1<sup>st</sup> year review

Thursday, October 2, 2008 www.thisist

## Website tackles carbon emissions and congestion



**Step by step:** Centre, Bristol City Council workers Ben Robinson, from the transport planning office, and Sian Davies, in the orange top, are surrounded by other willing walkers who know the environmental, health and financial benefits of travelling on foot

# Walk this way

**A WEBSITE** which plans walking routes to work has been launched in Bristol in a bid to fight carbon emissions and boost health citywide.

The site - [www.walkit.com](http://www.walkit.com) - lets users map the quickest journey between two points and print out directions from the screen.

It then calculates mileage and how many calories will be burnt - depending on whether the walking pace is fast, medium or slow.

The system also tells walkers how much carbon dioxide will be avoided by not using cars, taxis or buses.



I get the bus because it's too far to walk seven miles. But I try to get off a few stops early to have a bit of a walk.

Pensions officer Byron Clark, 24, from Emersons Green



I can't walk to work because it's



I cycle to work for my health. And it's more convenient as it gets me to work quicker. It takes me about 15 minutes to get in.

Phone engineer Andy Blacker, 40, from Brislington



I walk because that's the only

BA  
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# contents

1	executive summary	3
2	introduction	4
3	performance	5
4	recommendations	7

Forum for the Future - the sustainable development charity - works in partnership with leading organisations in business and the public sector. Our vision is of business and communities thriving in a future that is environmentally sustainable and socially just. We believe that a sustainable future can be achieved, that it is the only way business and communities will prosper, but that we need bold action now to make it happen. We play our part by inspiring and challenging organisations with positive visions of a sustainable future; finding innovative, practical ways to help realise those visions; training leaders to bring about change; and sharing success through our communications.

[www.forumforthefuture.org](http://www.forumforthefuture.org)

Registered charity number: 1040519

# 1 executive summary

- 1.1 **Walkit Bristol was launched in October 2008 with the target of attracting 15,000 users generating 50,000 routes in the first year.**
- 1.2 **Over the last 12 months over 14,616 visitors have created at least 30,292 journeys (a site redesign in April meaning that these are the minimum figures for Bristol users).**
- 1.3 **A behavior change survey suggests that this has resulted in at least 22,000 fewer short car journeys on Bristol's congested roads in the last 12 months, saving over 12 tons of CO2 emissions and other pollution of the city air.**
- 1.4 **Some 8,769 Bristol residents are now taking at least an extra hour of exercise a week as a result of walking with Walkit.com.**
- 1.5 **This report makes a number of recommendations to further market the use of Walkit.com and to continue to reduce unnecessary short car journeys in 2010.**

## 2 introduction

Walkit.com is a walking trip planner that allows users to plan a journey by foot using both the road and public rights of way network.

The site provides clear route maps that highlight local landmarks and give information on the estimated number of calories burned and walking time (according to a slow, medium or fast pace). It has the additional option of choosing quieter routes in comparison to the generally urban direct routes.

The Bristol version of Walkit.com was launched on October the 1st 2008.

The Bristol Walkit.com site was co-funded by Bristol PCT, Bristol City Council and Triodos bank, with contributions of £10,000, £5,000, and £3,000 respectively with partnership working facilitated by Forum for the Future.

Walkit.com are a commercial organisation, which now provide the service across 22 UK cities.

Bristol City Council have carried out the main promotion of the site, with the launch receiving positive coverage in the Bristol Evening Post under the headline 'Walk this way'.

The current list of stakeholders includes:

- Jamie Wallace, Walkit (supplier)
- Bristol Primary Care Trust (client)
- Transport Planning, Bristol City Council (client)
- Sian Davies, Bristol City Council (Walking the Way to health project)

# 3 performance

## Overall Bristol Impact Figures

Over the 12 months since its launch the Bristol walkit.com homepage has received 14,616 visitors, of which 4,936 have returned to the Bristol site at least once. These users have created 30,292 routes within Bristol city, with an average length of 3km.

In April 2009 a redesign of the site allowed users to create Bristol routes from a 'global' homepage and so were not captured in the Bristol site user statics. This explains the drop in visitors in April shown in Chart 1 (overleaf) and means that we likely surpassed the 15,000 users target set at the launch of the site.

## Behavior Change Survey Results

A survey, which ran across all the walkit.com City sites in May, developed several headline results:

- Nearly 80% of respondents say that walkit.com encouraged them (at least once) to switch to walking from another mode of transport.
- As a result of using walkit.com, the following percentage of respondents say they either 'always' or 'often' walk instead of using a:
  - Bus – 56%
  - Taxi – 40%
  - Car – 32%
  - Train – 23%
- Nearly 60% claim to be taking at least an extra hour of exercise per week as a result of using walkit.com.
- Respondents use walkit.com most for getting to work and related meetings (63%), as well as for local social purposes (61%).
- Most users heard about walkit.com through word of mouth (36%), or through a Google search (28%).
- We have more female than male users.
- 80% of respondents were aged 26 – 55.

## Trend Evaluation

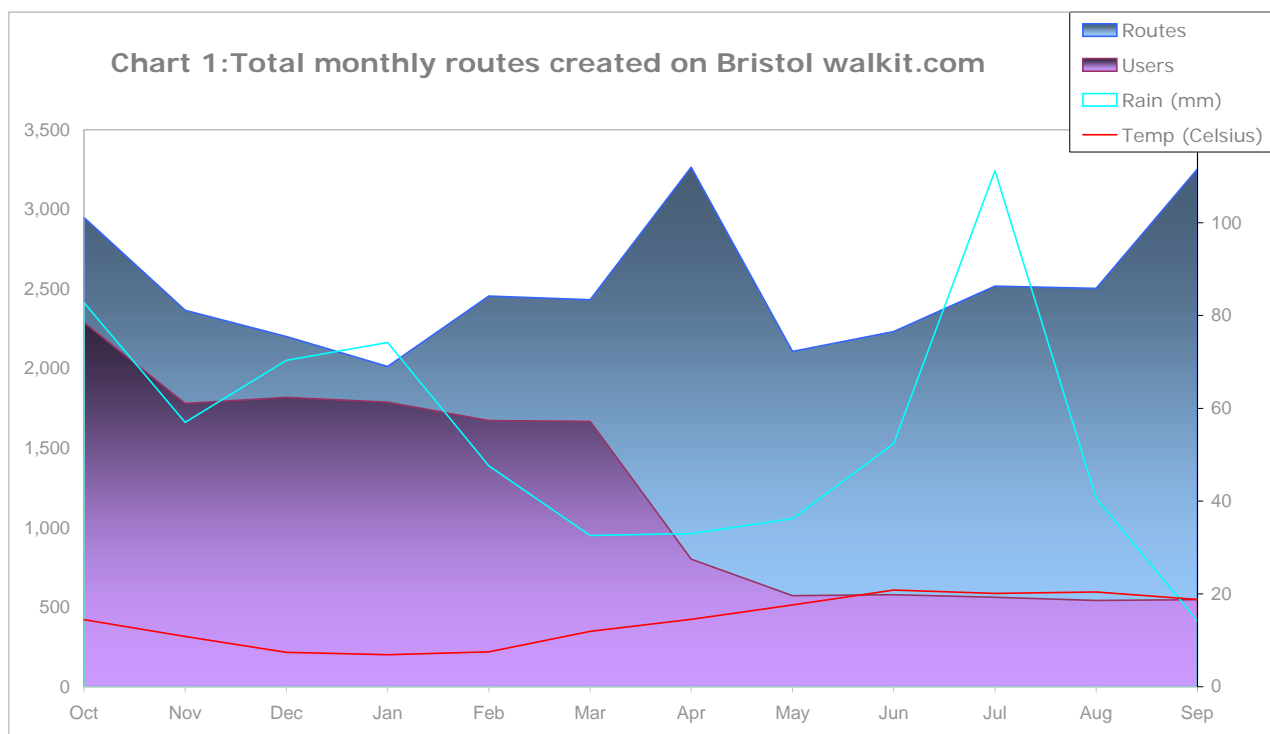
Many factors affect traffic to the site: weather, holidays, school term times as well as links to related promotion and marketing drives, such as the European Sustainable Mobility week in September. Random news reports or items on a popular website can distort all the above.

Correlation of weather statistics, obtained from the Met Office, with the number of routes produced shows that both mm of rain per month and the temperature, unsurprisingly, have an effect on the website's use (Chart 1). However total sunshine hours seemed to have very little effect. After its

launch in October, the site shows a decline in routes produced through the winter months, strongly correlated to daytime temperature variation. The rise in January is likely to be due to New Year's resolutions to 'get fit', as well as walking off the Christmas turkey.

The April peak coincides with the extra light in evening thanks to the clock change and seasonal improvements in weather. However higher summer temperature did not led to sustained high usage during the summer months; this may be explained in part by the increased levels of rain we experienced during the summer (especially in July). Additionally the summer school holiday period is likely to have reduced use, as the survey results show, most routes are work related.

Septembers peak can be linked, people retuning to work and school runs (one of the main uses) after summer holidays, as well as the European Sustainable Mobility Week as mentioned.



## Feedback and Development

Feedback for the Bristol walkit.com site has been uniformly positive with great demand for extension of the area covered by the site. Development of the site is proposed by Walkit.com, dependant on funding available to extend the geographical area and to include incline data.

## 4 recommendations

There are several low/no-cost options for promoting Bristol walkit.com involving working with our partners.

- Car use is restricted within both the University of West England and the University of Bristol, and modal change to cycling, public transport and walking are the key actions within the universities green travel plans. Therefore we should explore the options to advocate the inclusion of walkit.com site within their green travel plans, on the universities contact detail page's, and to promote it at the two universities 'fresher's' fairs.
- Most of Forum's partners within Bristol and the members of the West of England Carbon Challenge have 'How to find us' details on their websites. We should promote the inclusion of walkit.com as a linkable map option within these sites. We should encourage GWE Business West to advocate their members to do likewise.
- We should investigate the potential for a follow up piece in the Bristol Evening Post to celebrate over 30,000 routes created.
- All future Forum event and meeting invites and agendas should include a link to the site.
- A Bristol city specific survey should take place to more accurately assess the success of walkit.com in empowering a modal change in transportation choice.

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**December 2009**