

- 22 minutes of cycling can take you 4 miles, compared to 40 minutes for the same distance in congested cities

## HIGHLY COMMENDED

### Racing to Reduce Travel Impacts at Oxford Brookes University

Asking a senior manager to get 'on your bike' is tempting for many university staff. Harriet Waters, Environmental Coordinator at Oxford Brookes, had that privilege in 2006 when she set up a top team race from station to campus on bikes, buses, foot and taxi to launch a new Sustainable Travel Plan.

The Plan was an updated and extended version of the Green Commuter Plan, whose promotion of improved bus services, reduced car usage and increased cycling and walking, was commended in the 2004-05 Green Gown Awards. Progress has continued since then, with the percentage of staff driving by car falling from 55% in 1998 to 48% in 2004 and 46% in 2006. The percentage of staff cycling to work also has risen from 13% in 1998 to 17% in 2004 and 19% in 2006.

This happened despite the University expanding into less accessible sites than its main campus, making the travel plan objectives harder to achieve.

The Sustainable Travel Plan was informed by a carbon footprinting exercise carried out under the Carbon Management Programme. This demonstrated that transport accounted for 61% of the University's total carbon emissions, and that several important drivers of this - such as staff business travel and visitors to the campus - were not being fully addressed. The new Plan also has targets of reducing the percentage of staff driving to work to 40% by 2010, and the percentage of students to 7% (compared to 12% in 2004).

One major factor in reducing car commuting has been the introduction of Brookesbus in 2003, and its subsequent expansion. It now connects all major sites of the University, and the cost of a season ticket is included in student hall fees. It is also used by nearby residents, who previously had a poor bus service. This benefit, and other aspects of the Plan, have improved relationships with the local authority, which can be beneficial in other areas such as planning consents.



More has also been done to encourage walking, including production of leaflets describing walking routes - and estimates of calorie burning! - to the University's Headington Campus; offering lunch hour 'health walks' at all the sites; and running an annual 'Brookes Goes Walking' day to raise awareness.

Harriet Waters believes that "along with senior management commitment, a key feature of our plan is a ring fenced budget, which recycles the £130,000 a year we receive from car parking charges and other sources into transport improvements. This then allows to support a large number of different initiatives for specific groups, and to create an overall momentum which helps to build support and change behavior."

#### Judge's Comments on Continuous Improvement (continued)

*Transport at Oxford Brookes University was commended in the 2004-5 Green Gown Awards, and has continued to improve, for example, in patronage of BrookesBus, decline in car usage, and increased levels of cycling and walking. The new Sustainable Travel Plan is comprehensive and ambitious, and the University has disseminated its experience both within and outside the sector. Overall, its impressive achievements over the last decade demonstrate what can be achieved through sustained senior management support, and imaginative planning and implementation.*