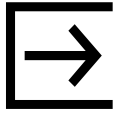


Bristol Cultural Development Partnership



Bristol Legible City

2001/ 2002 Evaluation Report

Introduction

The Bristol Legible City (BLC) project has been in operation for just over one year. With such a complex project that brings together public organisations and private sector companies with transport planners, artists and designers, among others – and one that will not be complete for many years, if ever – it will be impossible to identify impact for some time. Despite these difficulties, some assessment is essential so that future decisions on priorities and funding can be made. This report summarises the impact assessment work that has been undertaken so far, identifies evaluation work in progress, and puts forward proposals for future research. It should be noted that some comments are attributed to individuals and organisations; others – principally from questionnaires – have not been attributed.

Evaluation

Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP) is leading on the evaluation. Two workshops were held with members of the client group and city officers to determine appropriate methodology. It was accepted that evaluation should be long-term and, given limited resources, would need to use existing surveys and research by project participants initially. It was agreed to adopt both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and to look at peer comments and awards as well as interviews with users and beneficiaries. It was agreed also that much of the research in this early stage is designed more to identify foundation data for benchmarking purposes and test methodologies than to seek definitive findings. Despite this, the initial results of the project suggest that it is being seen positively by most stakeholders.

Problems

Four problems have been identified:

- There are many users of BLC. The response of each of these to the system needs to be assessed as they have different objectives to meet or to be met. They include: visitors and tourists; businesses; venues and attractions; people admiring artwork and using it to find their way around the city.
- As a variety of stakeholders are involved in creating BLC, and as these are each measuring themselves against their own criteria, it is essential to obtain coherence in data collection.
- Best Value provides evaluation guidance with its four Cs: challenge, compare, consult and competition. For BLC, benchmarking against other cities is difficult because of the unique nature of the project – there is no city at present with a similar project to compare Bristol to. However, as BLC is a key city council project it is important to follow Best Value guidance. Further work is needed on this.

- Some work had started before evaluation criteria and methodology could be agreed making it difficult to evaluate. By the time interest in evaluation started, *walkietalkie* – one of the arts projects – had already started for example, and there was no clarity about project aims.

Methodology

It was agreed that first phase evaluation would cover the following:

- Pedestrian signage and maps
- I+ usage
- At-Bristol car park
- Workplace
- South West Arts Marketing/ Birmingham visual arts project and other arts activity
- Building Legible Cities conference

The methods to be used in gathering data were agreed as:

- Interviews – in person, by telephone and e-mail – with key members of the client group and beneficiaries and users, principally venues.
- Existing market research undertaken by each project/ group leader.
- Research by City Space regarding I+ usage.
- BLC conference evaluation.
- A short questionnaire sent to members of the Bristol Tourism and Conference Bureau – BTCB (the response to this was limited. A follow-up questionnaire given to BTCB members gathered 10 additional responses).
- Biennial Bristol visitor survey, undertaken by South West Tourism on behalf of BTCB.
- Personal observation, by BCDP and others involved in the project.
- Newspaper coverage, peer comments and awards.
- Figures on project progress kept by City ID, Bristol City Council and others.

In undertaking this research, it was found that no research has been undertaken by At-Bristol into the use of the car park so this area has been held over for future research.

What is BLC Trying to Achieve?

Evaluation is assessing if a project has achieved what it set out to do, learning from this, and changing, where needed, as a result. The stated objectives of BLC are that it will be unique, that it will improve people's understanding of the city, and that it will improve people's experience of the city. These objectives will be delivered by projects encompassing city identity, improved information and transport as well as new arts projects, a clutter reduction programme, and the use of state-of-the-art technology. BLC is also a showcase city for Adshel – an objective that needs a separate assessment of impact.

So far, BLC projects have included a new, integrated pedestrian signage system and maps, linking main points of arrival with key attractions, visitor destinations and landmarks. In addition, arts projects have been introduced to enable people to learn about the city and enjoy it more, and to help them to find their way around. Finally, debate about legibility, legible cities and BLC has been launched through a biennial conference and other activity.

There has also been wider use of the unique BLC font: it has been used by BTCB on the website (www.visitbristol.com) and in print material from 2002. Bristol 2008, the city's bid to be European Capital of Culture, also uses Bristol Transit.

The Uniqueness of BLC

Given that the approach taken, and what has resulted, has not been replicated elsewhere, few would deny that BLC is unique. BLC uses a unique font – Bristol Transit – and unique colour for pedestrian signage and maps. The maps are also unique in that they are heads-up, not north facing, so that what you see on the map is where you are. The uniqueness of the project has attracted much interest and is the basis of the awards BLC has received. Even in this initial phase, it can be concluded that BLC has had a significant impact and has achieved what it has set out to do.

Signage and Maps

Since the project started, 100 new signs and 80 new maps have been installed. As a result, 110 pieces of redundant pedestrian signs have been removed. This programme will be extended in 2002 when another 200 pieces of street furniture will be removed. Up to 30 pieces of redundant furniture, including street plates, will eventually be removed from Queen Square, for example, including poles, no waiting and one-way signs. Just three BLC signposts and maps have replaced these. Clutter reduction is, therefore, being achieved.

BLC has already won two awards: the regional planning award and the Royal Town Planning Institute Award for Innovation (February 2002). Jill Pain, chairman of the judging panel, said:

This is an outstanding example of planning innovation and achievement, which fully deserves wide recognition. The planning professionals involved should be proud that their work has resulted in significant environmental and public benefits. We were particularly impressed by the use of specially developed maps using three-dimensional building images that people can readily recognise.

The collaborative and connected nature of BLC was also praised by the Planning Officers Society. James Russell said: 'Identifying with our towns and cities, and making them more attractive and understandable to residents and visitors, is one of the keys to urban renaissance. The Bristol project is a credit to the joined up working of all involved, and should be a template for others to follow.'

This praise has been matched by local users. The Bristol Civic Society (BCS) has praised the project. One member said: 'The signs, especially the maps, are one of the best things to happen in the city last year.' Charles Manton, writing in the BCS April 2002 *Newsletter*, said: 'Our congratulations to all concerned! Three cheers for Bristol being best.' In addition to the quality of the system, he praised the way the signs had escaped 'the scourge of advertising stickers which disfigure just about every other vertical surface in the city.'

Arts organisations have also been supportive. The Royal West of England Academy has not previously benefited from signage. For them the sign system is 'excellent' and the maps 'helpful – though there should be more.' They commented:

Anything that facilitates circulation within the city is to be welcomed. I think the benefits will be more evident in the long term when people become more familiar with the attractions that are located within the city through the sign system. In the short term, BLC provides a comprehensive and inclusive orientation system and provides an extremely visible impression of Bristol working together for the benefit of its citizens and visitors.

Dick Penny, Director of Watershed Media Centre, said that Watershed continues to 'increase its visitor numbers ... assisted by increased visibility to visitors.' He calls the signs 'distinctive, clear and informative' and the maps 'very good – informative and fun.' He added:

Signing in the central area is now much clearer and gives pedestrians a good idea not just of where they are and where they want to go but also what else is available to them – it makes the city feel more accessible and attractive. The design sends out a strong message that this is a modern city with a sense of quality and style. Debate around the whole concept has helped raise aspiration in Bristol to make it a better city and projected Bristol to external audiences in a positive manner.

The Clifton Suspension Bridge Visitor Centre felt that even though they have had 'no feedback that customers have come here with the help of BLC' the signs were generally very helpful.

Helping business operate more effectively is another key aim of BLC. John Savage, Chief Executive of the Bristol Chamber of Commerce and Initiative, says: 'All our research shows that signage was a major problem in attracting businesses to the city and helping them get the most out of it. The new pedestrian signage and maps not only helps to overcome that problem but – because it is unique – contributes to making Bristol a more attractive place. Of course, business will not be satisfied until vehicular signage is improved, but this is an excellent start.'

A good example of where BLC is helping business is Broadmead Shopping Centre. Broadmead attracts 39 million visitors each year, but needs to attract more to withstand the threat of out of town shopping and to make the case for expansion to investors. Better signage, maps, and information generally, are essential. A major problem is that customers and visitors find it difficult to understand where Broadmead is, as well as know what it has, because of the confusing nature of Bristol City Centre. BLC is a 'significant step forward because it creates the correct impression for our visitors', says John Hirst, Broadmead manager. As a result 'we give the right impression to newcomers, customers feel more comfortable and it tells them all that we mean business.' He adds: 'We see many people looking at the signs/ maps each day. Customers are impressed by them. It creates a good feeling for them. They are impressed by Bristol. Our city is being seen as progressive. It sets a standard for us and a benchmark for other cities.'

Thomas Cook, one of the shops at the entrance to Broadmead, like the signs and maps as they no longer have to deal with large numbers of enquiries about Broadmead. They told John Hirst that 'only a small number of people now ask for directions. This allows staff to concentrate on their business.' One problem that

remains for them is the need to provide ongoing information about the location of the Tourism Information Centre, however.

BLC has been of benefit also to Bristol's higher education institutes. Barry Taylor of the University of Bristol said that it has not only helped people find their way to the university, but also that it has 'added visual interest to the central area and boosted Bristol's image as a modern, hospitable city.' In terms of the University of Bristol, Barry Taylor says:

BLC has benefited the university in two ways. One is that there are fewer lost souls wandering the streets of Clifton looking for us. The second is that the university markets itself partly on its location at the heart of a creative, forward-looking city. BLC is evidence that this is the case.

Over time, he believes, it may have a positive impact on residents' pride of place – not least because of the quality product. 'All the elements of BLC work well, both individually and as a suite' he believes. 'It is clear that they have been thought through with enormous care and imagination.'

The first independent survey of the signage system since installation offers encouraging results for BLC. The biennial Bristol Visitor Survey, undertaken by South West Tourism on behalf of BTCB, which looks at road and pedestrian signs, and maps and information boards among other points, found that 61.3 per cent of visitors said that Bristol's pedestrian signs were either good or very good (8.2 per cent found them poor or very poor). Out of an optimum score of 5, the average was 3.84 (in 1999 – the first survey – the average score was 3.44). The results were less encouraging for maps and information boards where 36.6 per cent found them good/ very good while 13.4 per cent found them poor or very poor. Out of an optimum score of five, the average was 3.48 (an increase from 1999 when it was 3.20). However, over one-third of respondents had no opinion. John Hallett, BTCB director, said:

I think visitors are often under less pressure with time and hence are sometimes less likely to take signage, and their interaction with it, in their stride. I think that the results are encouraging and show a higher level of satisfaction than we saw two years ago but indicate that good street signage is but one part of the total information service that today's discriminating tourist expects.

There has been some criticism of the signs. At-Bristol commented:

Overall it has been a disbenefit so far for leisure and tourism. As an example, the delay in introducing good vehicular signage under BLC has meanwhile prevented At-Bristol from getting old-fashioned brown signs in the city or on the motorway (as the Highways Agency won't act until given the go-ahead from the city). We haven't got the new system (whatever it will be) in place and meanwhile the city council has not allowed us to have brown signs. Other attractions are affected too. This means that Bristol is underselling itself. Therefore, not only has BLC not benefited us or other destinations, it has actually harmed us by preventing us from getting the level of signage that we would have got if BLC hadn't been established. It is not clear if the council's unwillingness to act is a matter of policy related to BLC, or of diversion of resources to BLC, and it may have been both at different times.

This problem is acknowledged and is being addressed though it is accepted that there is a need for traffic management to consider the better use of temporary traffic signs.

Other criticism has been leveled at what, so far, is a concentration on new signage in the city centre. Ruth Davey of Bristol East Side Traders, welcoming generally the system as making it easier to get round the city centre, says:

Our small and medium sized enterprises in Bristol's inner city (Easton, Ashley and Lawrence Hill wards) have been crying out for years for better signage that will lead people from the city centre to neighbouring retail areas such as St Mark's Road, Stapleton Road, Stokes Croft etc. Traders in St Mark's Road, in particular, have been trying to get better signage as their clients come from all over the region and some find it difficult to find their way around.

Plans for the extension of the pedestrian signage to neighbourhoods should contribute to solving this problem.

One group disliked what they saw as the introduction of 'modernism' in heritage areas. Gillian Davies of the Christmas Steps and St Michael's Hill Association told the Bristol *Evening Post* (4 May 2001) 'They are totally inappropriate for a conservation area and provide a superb example of 21st century brutalism... They are not appropriate for historical settings such as Christmas Steps or King Street. They are also very "busy" signs which can be quite confusing when you have got several pointing in the same direction.'

Finally, though BCS welcomes the clutter reduction programme, it believes that the 'proliferation of new commercial signs' makes this difficult to implement (*BCS Newsletter*, April 2002).

I+

I+, high-tech information points, offer the ability to send e-mails, to look for a job, to find information (it is linked directly to the council's website and the website of BTCB, www.visitbristol.co.uk). For most of the time, 16 kiosks have been working. Most are in the central area; two – in Shirehampton and Bedminster Parade – provide opportunities for use in neighbourhoods.

The reception for I+ has not been as strong as for the signage system. Whilst generally it is seen as positive, there is criticism as to usage and general maintenance. Broadmead's view is that the system is not being used to its full potential currently. A representative of the Clifton Suspension Bridge Visitor Centre found the system 'Far too complicated, takes too long, [and the] user is not aware that anything is "happening".' An officer at the Royal West of England Academy said:

I think it is great to see such a system throughout the city as it shows a forward thinking attitude. However, I am sceptical as to whether the units are useful. I would be interested to see the statistics of what information is being accessed and how often. I also feel that the units are not maintained well enough. Although they seem to be working fine, they are not kept particularly clean, which I am sure puts people off using them.

Another comment made, from an organisation involved in tourism, was that I+ is 'not user-friendly, too slow to work [and is] more frustrating than helpful.'

These comments – by far the most negative about BLC – is perhaps borne out by user numbers. Table 1 provides data about users in the first six months since the system was installed:

Date	Number of live kiosks	Number of users	Av. users per day	Number of channels	Av. channels per user	Usage time (hours)	Av. time per
1 July '01 - 1 August '01	16	25,590	55	27,089	1.1	870.1	
1 August '01 - 1 September '01	16	27,436	58	36,467	1.3	1,019.3	
1 September '01 - 1 October '01	16	21,760	50	28,979	1.3	801.6	
1 October '01 - 1 November '01	16	23,196	51	29,023	1.3	799.9	
1 November '01 - 1 December '01	16	20,265	44	24,895	1.2	671.1	
1 December '01 - 1 January '02	15	17,570	40	24,955	1.4	475.0	

Table 1

Notes: Average figures are spread over the whole of the 16 kiosks. December figures did not include the kiosk in the Galleries.

There has been a steady decline in all elements measured. This may be due to problems with content though this is being extended – a new women’s channel was launched in March 2002. Further research is essential to determine satisfaction levels. Bristol City Council is happy with the neighbourhood I+ units, which are attracting more users than anticipated.

The Arts and BLC

Three arts projects have taken place so far linked to BLC: *walkietalkie*, Workplace, and the joint Bristol/ Birmingham visual arts cultural tourism initiative.

Artistic Leadership

Overall artistic direction, in the first year, was provided by FAT – Fashion Architecture Taste as lead artist, funded by South West Arts through the Year of Artist scheme. This residency had three aims: to provide an opportunity for an experienced artist to work with public and professional groups including planners, urban designers, architects, transport planners; to promote linkages and connections between collaborators and residencies in BLC; and to contribute to the artistic development of the project as a whole.

In their evaluation, FAT believes that they have helped establish ‘the validity of a role a lead artist [can bring] to a project of this type’ even if the complexity of the project meant that it took longer to gather momentum than other projects. They believe that they have helped foster relationships between the client team and council departments and arts organisations (such as Spike Island), and others. *High Life*, the placing of artist-designed bird boxes in Queen Square, has brought together the city centre projects team, arts officers, nature conservation and wildlife organisations and the city centre management team, for example. FAT

has also bought new thinking to the project, as well as stimulated different thinking about legibility by those involved. FAT accepts that this is only a start. They say that 'whilst we cannot claim that such departments and organisations have become totally convinced of the need for such involvement, at least the residency has provided the opportunity for debate to begin.' Another result of this has been, they say, a heightened awareness of BLC as a project. Above all, they say, what has been achieved is that artists are not seen 'merely as a pleasant addendum to the project, but an indispensable and critical component of it.'

Bristol City Council's Arts Development Unit share the views of the success of the residency pointing particularly to the partnerships created, better dialogue, and increased understanding of the contribution that the arts can play in urban design and planning, and the role and approach to temporary arts projects by officers and members within the authority.

Arts Projects

Some individual evaluation of the three arts projects has taken place:

walkietalkie

walkietalkie was a joint project by poet, Ralph Hoyte and Colin Pearce, a visual artist. The result, a 600-metre continuous long poem, encouraged people to learn about the city by reading the poem placed on shop fronts, cafes, the ground, even part on the Bristol ferry service. No formal evaluation was undertaken, though some anecdotal evidence is available through informal feedback from those that followed the poem and from a video prepared by students. Penny Mellor, a Bristol resident, wrote to Bristol City Council: 'Just a quick note to say how much I'm enjoying the linear poem ... both in bits as I rush around the city centre and in its entirety last week when we had a visitor and followed it round (we loved the way even the ferry boat had it on). It's brilliantly Bristle and sparky and eye-catching and a lot of fun. Well done!' It was also reported that two coachloads of tourists from Spain and France had come to see it as part of their visit to Bristol. The Bristol *Evening Post* conducted a short 'vox pop' of Bristol residents about the project. There was some criticism of the poem being on the floor and at the bottom of windows, but generally the response was favourable. BCS liked the project. Charles Manton called it a 'sadly temporary strip of witty and assuredly legible text.' He added: 'Very cheering, is it not, that Bristol should go in for public art, light-hearted or more serious as it turns out to be?' (*BCS Newsletter*, April 2002).

Workplace

Workplace, a project of the Independent Artists Network (IAN), was founded to promote dialogue between artists, arts organisations and local authorities; to create opportunities for local artists; and to improve public accessibility to the arts. It took place between 20th October and 12th November 2001. Workplace used empty buildings and other spaces for the exhibition of art works and performances by new and established artists from Bristol and the South West. BLC provided funds for the programme, which used the Bristol Transit Font. In their evaluation it was found generally that the programme was excellent, with publicity and marketing seen as two of the strongest

elements. Two respondents commented that the leaflet was not legible though these referred to the timetable in the leaflet rather than the quality of leaflet production. One artist commented: 'There was a lot of information on the timetable of events and it was difficult to know where to start.' Another called it a 'very clear, well put together publicity brochure.' Another comment was 'brochure good.' There was some concern expressed about signage for events: BLC may need to address the issue of temporary signs for events in the future. In general, this was seen as a positive event, and a successful one. Mary O'Malley from Bristol City Council Arts Team said: 'Workplace benefited enormously from a good publicity and a marketing campaign essential for a project happening over a protracted period in hidden spaces. Without it, the project could have been invisible except to those "in the know" and would have had little impact beyond the artists' community.'

SWAM/ Birmingham Project

Between March-June 2001, South West Arts Marketing and Birmingham Arts Marketing collaborated on a visual arts project to raise the profile of the visual arts and increase visitor attendance in venues in the two cities and to obtain intelligence for future cultural tourism. A poster and a leaflet were prepared using, for the first time outside of the project, the Bristol Transit Font. The result was clear, legible print. Catriona Henderson, Arnolfini's marketing manager, said: 'I think the print worked well. The leaflets looked distinctive in the leaflet racks and were picked up very quickly and numerous visitors were overheard admiring the posters. I think the print, as planned, also worked well as a generic promotional tool within Bristol. Front of house staff reported a number of visitors being aware of the campaign.' The follow up evaluation found that visitors had mixed views of Bristol. On the positive side, it is seen as a vibrant, cosmopolitan city, with art at the centre of what it offers. Negatively, confusing geography, expensive transport and the congested nature of the city are problems. The city is also seen as inaccessible by car. The comfort offered by BLC could do much to overcome these negative perceptions, though better vehicular signage is essential. Enhancements to the journey experience, planned by BLC, may also help.

Building Legible Cities Conference

The first BLC conference (15 March 2001) had three key aims. First, to broadcast widely the concept of Bristol Legible City (BLC), to show elements of the project in situ, and to promote a future shared vision for BLC. Secondly, to promote Bristol as an innovative city and to position Bristol as a leading city in terms of the urban regeneration agenda. Finally, part of the conference aimed to illustrate the partnership nature of BLC, in particular the innovative working with Adshel.

The key findings of the post-conference evaluation were:

- 93 per cent described the conference as very good and good
- 95 per cent of paying guests called Building Legible Cities good value for money
- Most keynote speakers received over 70 per cent good/ very good ratings
- 95 per cent described the conference pack as good/ very good
- 97 per cent are interested in attending future Building Legible Cities events

Perhaps most significant of all, given that this was the first formal evaluation of the new signage system by outsiders to the city, was that 92 per cent of non-Bristol delegates found the conference venue easy to find.

Comments generally about the conference included: 'A really successful conference. I thought the contributions were excellent – certainly stimulating and thought provoking! I really enjoyed it.' One commented on the arts: 'As someone involved in the arts, I found the interaction between urban development and the arts of great interest. The presentation of views from both ends of the spectrum made the conference more stimulating.'

One section of the questionnaire looked at Bristol. One person commented: 'The whole concept of legibility in Bristol is excellent and very inspirational to other places.' Another said: 'The project is impressive in its scope and holistic approach. Implementation thus far is nicely considered from a design perspective and appears to have very much enhanced development across the city as a whole.' There were also complimentary comments about Bristol and urban design. One delegate said: 'I am very impressed with what I have seen today.' Another said that 'I like what I have seen.'

One criticism – made by a number of delegates – referred to the lack of signage on the way back to Temple Meads station. There were also a number of comments made suggesting improvements to the system: 'The legible city project has gone a long way to address many issues that face visitors to Bristol, in particular the needs of those who need to be directed clearly and innovatively from A to B. The use of art is wonderful and should be encouraged further. What needs further consideration are the needs of the less able "physically" in respect of the I+ points some of which appear to be wheelchair inaccessible.'

The value in undertaking the conference was shown by the delegate that said 'The legible city project is something I was only vaguely aware of until recently – but now I have seen the results I think they are excellent – something that will not only help visitors enjoy our city, but also those of us who live here.' Another said: 'The project is very exciting, and it's working. Looking forward to seeing what happens next. Especially as a Bristolian, it's good to be proud of my city again.' Another said: 'A great city. Each time I come, I like it more and feel able to engage in its balance of "user friendliness" and complexity which is slow to reveal its joys and excitement – and all the better for it.'

Other comments included: 'The legible city project is a major achievement (especially in a city as politically complex as Bristol). The challenge must be not to stand still.' Another said: 'I was very impressed by the regeneration activity and the attention to public art – stimulating. BLC is very exciting and well presented.' One added: 'The project will require a high level of commitment to maintenance (not just the fabric of the signs etc but also the system – to ensure it is kept up to date and relevant). Need to ensure it is complemented by a continuous clutter removal programme so real benefits of reduced signage are seen quickly.' A final comment was: 'Very enjoyable event – refreshing different speakers, kept the attention levels high. Made me realise how ahead of the game Bristol is.'

Interest from Outside Bristol

BLC has produced a suite of high quality publications, which are mostly distributed free of charge. These have been circulated widely. There has been considerable interest in the project from, among others, Cardiff, Swansea, Newcastle, Liverpool, Sheffield, Nottingham, Oxford and Reading. Other visitors to the city to look at BLC include British Airports Authority and the Design Council. Articles about BLC have appeared in trade and academic journals – such as *Urban Environment Today*, *Architect's Journal*, *Property People*, *Building Design*, *Graphics International*, *Urban Design Quarterly*, *Creative Review*, *Ordnance Survey Magazine*, *Design News*, *Landlines* (Landscape Design Trust), *Local Government News*, *Built Environment*, as well as local newspapers.

Most of this coverage has been positive. However, in a comment column in *Building Design* (23 March 2001), John Punter, reflecting on his presence at the BLC Conference, raised a number of issues. He referred to discontent with the partnership with Adshel and the 'intensification of advertising that this would bring' together with resentment 'about the further intrusion of corporate logos and hard-sell images into the city's public space.' He also noted that legibility carried the danger of excluding some people from public space: 'Another concern was the progressive gentrification and sanitisation of public space, and the subtle and not-so-subtle social exclusions that take place as it is made safe and comfortable for middle-class inhabitation.' Though Punter's criticisms are not borne out by other conference evaluation, nor by the experience of other attendees, nor, indeed, by the project itself, the issues he raises are worth pursuing in debate. Future evaluation might consider, for example, asking whether people in the city have perceived an increase in the amount of on-street advertising.

Southern Arts is using the system as an inspiration to others. Peter Taylor, who leads the Arts in the Centre project, said in 2002:

I've been very impressed with the innovative signage system in Bristol and first experienced it as a pedestrian when I attended the conference in March 2001. On arrival at Bristol Temple Meads Station I decided to put the route map to the Watershed in my pocket and use the system. The route between the station and the Watershed is complex and not one that I have taken before. The signs were at all the key points on the journey and I did not get lost at any time. I found the system easy to use and the projected journey times on the maps removed any stress or concern about arriving late. An excellent system and one that I have no hesitation in recommending to cities and town centres in our region.

BLC was the subject of one of the workshops in the January 2002 conference on *Managing Partnerships*, and featured in the associated publication. Evaluation data from delegates endorsed the findings of the BLC Conference, though at a slightly lower level: 83 per cent of non-Bristol delegates found the venue easy to find. The management of the project will continue to feature in future BCDP work on partnership research and development.

Where Next – BLC?

In conducting this research, some points have been made about where next for the project. One commented: 'More signs, and more further away from the city centre. A good start – don't stop now!' Others share this view, especially in arguing for the extension of the system to neighbourhoods. Additional views put forward include:

- Assistance with overall management standards for the city.
- Development of one-stop shop for advice for the whole central area.
- New vehicular signage.
- Extension of I+.
- Better information, perhaps through publication of a newsletter.
- Creating distinctive arrival/ welcome signs on the M32 and at railway and bus stations.
- Automated information after hours at key arrival points.
- Use of maps by organisations involved in tourism and arts.

Some of these suggestions are now in development, or planned in future programmes of work.

Where Next – BLC Research?

Some research is ongoing in BLC. There is survey work currently, for example, in assessing the impact of the preliminary navigators' scheme and the first Viewpoint – a large-size screen – in Broadmead. Results of this research will be included in future reports.

Further research is essential. Research could include: neighbourhood identity and sense of place; the management needs of legible cities; and city change management and legible cities. There is also good opportunity to examine further the impact of the arts programme through projects in progress. These include:

- ***Pedestrians' Friends***

This project, based in the Redcliffe regeneration area, is promoting direct engagement with the public. It will include the use of a caravan as a mobile exhibition. Evaluation could look at the impact on the artist – perhaps by asking them to keep a diary – as well as on pedestrians helped.

- ***Bristol Bridge Renewal***

Evaluation work here could look at perceptions of users of the bridge before or after through the setting up of a small panel of 100 people.

- ***High Life***

Every resident and office worker in Queen Square should be asked to comment on the project and the issues it raises. A database has been set up for this already.

Possible future evaluation methods include:

- Academic commentators – students, researchers and staff writing about BLC.
- Getting another city to appraise or review BLC.
- Questionnaire to members of the Civic Society.
- Burges Salmon Index on general business views of the system – one year on.
- Questionnaire to go out with all those requesting the new maps/ or one sent shortly after.

Above all, an evaluation toolkit needs to be prepared for all participants in BLC projects – and other projects where research is taking place – so that results can be evaluated effectively and comparatively.

A good target for the completion of this research is the 2003 BLC Conference. This should have as a key theme evaluating the impact of legible cities. All of the above research needs to have taken place by then, with the full results, and a printed guide to evaluation, produced for delegates.

Conclusion

BLC has had a major impact in its first year of implementation, especially in the city centre where new signage and maps make Bristol easier for residents and visitors to find their way to places quickly. Also well received have been the arts projects, the raising of debate through the conference and other initiatives, and, though perhaps less so than others, the I+ system. The awards given to the project is one indication of impact; more important is the positive reception from the beneficiaries and users of the system. Though less prominent, the care given to the development of the project, especially in bringing together different disciplines, departments and organisations, should be acknowledged as underlying the success.

Overall, Bristol is seen as an innovative place, working in partnership for the good of all that live, work in and visit the city. There has been some criticism of the focus on the city centre and the problems of vehicular signage continue to give cause for concern, but these are being addressed. BLC has made an excellent start: the test seems now to be about extending the system both in terms of geographic spread and in the product components available, and in sustaining and extending the partnership to continue to maximise resources.

Andrew Kelly

Melanie Kelly

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