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The Bristol Method

Green Capital shares learnings

Bristol has created an online toolkit enabling cities around the world to understand and apply the lessons it has learned in becoming a more sustainable city. With guidance on everything from creating a vision to measuring success, The Bristol Method represents a valuable legacy of the city's year as European Green Capital.

Long famous for its environmental leadership and active 'green' citizens, Bristol was chosen by the European Commission as 2015's European Green Capital. This prestigious annual award is given to cities that are willing to act as role models and help other cities keen to 'go green'. Bristol wanted to bring together in one place the experience and knowledge it has gained from the year itself, as well as the previous decade of hard work, to fulfil its pledge to help other cities become greener and more sustainable.

To make it as easy as possible for cities to rise to their sustainability challenges, Bristol developed a methodology for measuring, documenting and sharing its achievements. The result is a series of modules with easy-to-read 'how to' guides on particular topics which use Bristol's experience as case studies. Named 'The Bristol Method', this document covers the five themes of Bristol's Green Capital year - economy, energy, resources, transport and food and nature - as well as broader subjects such as how to prepare a winning bid.

Success factors

Freely available online (www.bristol2015.co.uk/method), the toolkit draws on the knowledge and experiences of the municipality, local businesses, university academics and grassroots organisations to deliver both information and inspiration. It is comprehensive, covering every kind of activity from small neighbourhood initiatives to strategic council-led infrastructure projects. It also flags up flashes of innovative genius, such as the creation of a voluntary local currency, the Bristol pound, which has empowered local people to trade more efficiently within their local area. And it also gives generic advice, so readers can tailor recommendations to their own circumstances.



Over the course of three separate applications, we learned the most effective way of putting a bid together. Getting the right balance between different types of contributor is crucial. We had great facts from our technical people and great copywriters, but a critical role is that of balancer, getting contributors to discuss and agree the text and so producing a stronger bid.

Mark Leach, Bristol City Council

cities in action

December 2015

where: Bristol, UK
what: environment
when: 2015

One of the primary success factors any city following in Bristol's footsteps will need to understand is how to use partnerships to drive change. The module on this topic brings home Bristol's expertise in this area by focusing on the establishment, funding, governance and achievements of the city's largest and most unique collaborative platform, the Bristol Green Capital Partnership. Formally instigated by the City Council in 2007, this partnership owes much to earlier activity by local activists who joined together to develop the concept and delivery of Bristol as a 'green' city.

Valuable insights

In the same opening section on 'Transforming the city', which helps cities think about how to set a vision for the future and unlock funding to achieve it, another module shares some of the ways city sustainability is being measured and how these might evolve in the future. Providing practical examples of what leading cities are doing and learning, the module also includes case studies on Bristol's Quality of Life Survey and Open Data Journey and how it set about measuring the impact of its year as European Green Capital.

The Bristol Method goes on to outline how Bristol won the bid and chose to celebrate its year in the spotlight, with modules on how to use art to inspire change, engage young people and embed sustainability into the curriculum. As it took Bristol three attempts to win the European Capital Award and it was the first winner to run a dedicated schools programme, these sections are especially valuable. There is much for others to learn from Bristol's education programme, which encourages educators to weave the narrative of greener living into different subjects through class teaching, games, workshops and field trips.

Innovative measures

Subsequent modules showcase progress in the five thematic areas. Readers can find out how Bristol has promoted the green economy and succeeded in getting small businesses involved through Go Green, a network enabling them to share best practice and show leadership in sustainability. How it is cutting the city's carbon footprint through pioneering projects to generate renewable energy, insulate homes and



establish a municipal energy company. And how it is creating a more sustainable transport network and a more liveable city through innovative partnerships and measures such as smart ticketing and smarter bus stops.

The toolkit's Resources module explores Bristol's activities to promote recycling and reduce food waste. This also includes the bright ideas these have generated, such as a new kind of reuse hub where people can shop, donate and learn new skills and organisations can share warehousing and vehicles. The issue of food waste comes up again in the Food and Nature theme, which includes modules that explain the steps Bristol has taken to protect its green spaces and become a more sustainable food city. Steps such as launching the Bristol Good Food Plan, which shows every relevant organisation how it can use its expertise to make the biggest difference.

With interest in the European Green Capital award high, a number of cities keen to learn more have already been introduced to The Bristol Method during visits organised through the International Delegate Programme. Its formal launch took place at the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, which was attended by representatives from 190 countries. Originally made up of 23 documents, the online resource is growing by the month and Bristol is determined to ensure its longevity. So, as the city continues its journey towards sustainability beyond 2015, it can also continuously evolve and add value to this unique guide to creating healthier, happier cities.



The Bristol Method will ensure that all the progress made during the year does not fade away and goes part way to answering how the city made the most of its status and ensured that funding was well spent.

Dr Andrew Garrard,
Bristol Green Capital Chair

