



Category: Transport or Automotive Campaign

Company: Fugu PR and Hourbike

Entry title: #Putting cycling at the heart of Brighton

Brief and objectives:

In 2017, Brighton & Hove City Council appointed bike share operator HourBike to manage the introduction of the city's first cycle share scheme – the Brighton "Life Bikes".

As their appointed PR team, and having supported HourBike in their Council pitch, our role was to deliver a successful launch campaign and put Life Bikes and cycling at the heart of the Brighton & Hove community.

Our brief was to:

- Build awareness of the scheme's launch via local and national print, broadcast and online media outlets and social media channels
- Educate locals about the scheme's application process (app downloads and account sign-up)
- Create an engaged local customer base – contributing to the long-term viability of the scheme
- Encourage Life Bike sign-ups during launch from locals and visitors to the city

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

Having studied over 1,000 cycle schemes operating worldwide (and some high-profile failures), research showed that Brighton's new bike share scheme needed to:

1. Gain authentic support from the local community
2. Reflect its host city's values and identity

Brighton has a unique and proud identity amongst its 250,000 strong highly-connected population. Residents are intensely proud of their home; YouGov research lists it as the UK's most proud location, with a 91% 'pride rating'.

The Life Bike launch needed to reflect this unique and proud city character – quirky, playful and eco-friendly – with a key emphasis on giving back to its residents.

Our PR and comms strategy was built around embedding the scheme within the city and creating a true sense of pride and ownership.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

A series of teaser events were developed in the run-up to launch day, including a public unveiling of the new bike at a charity fundraiser attended by council officials and Caroline Lucas MP, and the first on-street procession of rainbow-decorated Life Bikes at the city's biggest public event, Pride.

A uniquely Brighton launch involved some of Brighton's most famous eccentric locals and the chance to ride the new Life Bike on Brighton's seafront.

The launch generated regular local media news announcements, interviews and features. National media outreach was aimed at tourists and locals, with social media channels supporting, advising and helping people use the bikes.

Finally, we created a brand ambassador scheme. Over the launch weekend, local enthusiasts volunteered to help people navigate the sign-up and app download process – a UK-first technology.

Implementation of tactics:

1. Life Bike unveiling – 25 June

We partnered with local homeless charity Brighton Housing Trust to auction rides on the first Life Bikes during their Cycle the World fundraiser, with all proceeds supporting the city's homeless. To maximise the day's impact, we invited Green MP, Caroline Lucas and local councillors, who tested the bikes and spoke about the scheme's positive environmental impact.

2. Teaser activity and momentum – July/August

We released regular news announcements, such as new bike hub locations, and feature content to local media. First ride reviews were secured with local media and bloggers, including Juice FM breakfast presenters who raced the prototype bike against a bus, with the race reaching their 50,000 morning listeners, and video content shared across social channels. The bike won!

3. Pride – 4 August

Pride is Brighton's biggest event, with 200,000+ attendees. We organised a fleet of 20 Life Bikes dressed in rainbow balloons to join the parade, led by EastEnders actress and LGBT role model, Luisa Bradshaw-White. The stunt was covered in People's magazine, BBC News, Guardian and Independent.

4. Launch party – 1 September

We created a very Brighton event featuring cycling enthusiasts, councillors, media and the city's most eccentric characters. Residents gathered along the seafront to watch famous Brighton characters, including Disco Bunny, Mellow Zebra, Birdyman and Vince Venus, test ride the Life Bikes. Using these iconic faces, we organised a Sergeant Pepper-style photoshoot, achieving blanket coverage in the city's media.

5. Life Bikes ambassador network – 2 & 3 September (launch weekend)

The scheme is the first in the UK to utilise the new 'smart' hybrid system, involving docking stations and GPRS tracking to lock and then find bikes anywhere in the city. To help users understand the technology, we recruited and trained 40 Brightonians who signed people up to the scheme and answered questions on the opening weekend.

6. Social media

We created and maintained BTN BikeShare's social media channels to make one-on-one connections with residents, answer queries and share positive stories, building Q&A responses in advance.

Measurement and evaluation:

The media campaign and launch weekend generated high awareness across the city. Highlights included:

- 89 dedicated Life Bike media stories:
- 11 segments and interviews on ITV Meridian, BBC News, BBC Sussex
- 1 blog from Caroline Lucas MP
- 7 national articles including Mail on Sunday, Mail Online, This is Money, Guardian and Independent
- 70 local print, online and broadcast articles, including front page of The Argus and Brighton & Hove Independent at launch

These results generated more 1.6 billion opportunities to see

- Online: 1.35 billion
- Circulation: 1.92 million
- Broadcast: 1.19 million

The campaign's success also helped Life Bikes secure a second, high-profile sponsor, American Express, supporting the scheme's long-term viability.

Guy Lloyd, Juice FM's drivetime presenter, described the Life Bikes and their launch as: "Quintessentially Brighton – a scheme utterly reflective of this creative, inclusive and playful city."

Under the ambassador network, the scheme's opening weekend saw 1,500+ people register and 1,700 trips taken.

The Life Bikes launch campaign was an overwhelming success. In its first month it had 9,000+ registrations, making it the most successful opening month of any Hourbike scheme. The first 30 days saw an average of 800 journeys per day – overachieving on Hourbike's proposed business plan.

Budget and cost effectiveness:

Total budget: £30,000 (£28,500 agency fees, £1,500 third-party costs)

- Cost per acquisition of each member: £3.33
- Cost of coverage generated per OTS £0.00002 (excluding social reach)

"Fugu's strategy and implementation firmly established the Life Bikes into the hearts of the Brighton and Hove community, making it the most successful first month of any Hourbike scheme in the UK and Europe. And now it's the most successful bike scheme in the UK, outside London! Thank you Fugu!"

Tim Caswell, MD of Hourbike

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