

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	3 NOVEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM	12
TITLE:	SIMON EU PROJECT UPDATE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	TRANSPORTATION & STREETCARE	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	MARIAN MARSH	TEL:	0118 937 2451
JOB TITLE:	TRANSPORT PLANNER	E-MAIL:	marian.marsh@reading.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Sub-Committee on the SIMON EU Project.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee notes the contents of this report.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is a statutory document setting out the Council's transport strategy and policy. Reading Borough Council's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) for the period 2011-26 was adopted by the Council on 29 March 2011.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The SIMON EU Project seeks to remove some of the barriers faced by people with disabilities and their carers when travelling around town, specifically Blue Badge users. A Smartphone App is being developed to provide real time information on the availability of Blue Badge parking, and a navigational aid which includes obstacles such as bollards and other street furniture. New technology to assist Councils with on-street validation of Blue Badges and hence help with enforcement is also being developed.

- 4.2 Reading was invited to join 3 other pilot cities working on the project: Madrid, Lisbon and Parma. Work is nearing completion to provide sensors at all the on-street disabled parking bays in Reading Town Centre to enable users to get real time information showing which parking spaces are available using the SIMON Smartphone App. This should make a trip to the town centre easier for Blue badge users and reduce cruising round looking for a free parking space.
- 4.3 Once the installation has been installed and tested, the next stage is to test the Smartphone App from a user's point of view. Volunteer testers will try the App and give feedback on how the App works for them (including how the dashboard can best be arranged for their use as some disabilities may need this tweaking) and feedback on whether the App helps them find a space to park. There is also a navigational aid on the App with barriers/access aids (eg bollards, steps, lifts etc) which they can test and give feedback although as many of the testers already know Reading well they may not use this aspect of the App so often.
- 4.4 The Council will also run a test day with a few volunteers to test the Blue Badge validity aspect of the new technology which will verify if a blue badge in a parked car is valid or not and hence aid parking enforcement.
- 4.5 Representatives working on the Project in the other pilot cities, plus the Smartphone App builders visited Reading at the end of September to map out the way forward with testing the technology, to share findings and experiences between the four pilot cities and to see the progress made installing the sensors. This also gave the Council the opportunity to introduce the team to the chair of the Physical Disabilities and Sensory Needs Forums and to showcase a number of other LSTF transport projects during a walking tour of the town centre.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The delivery of the SIMON EU Project initiatives outlined above will help to deliver the following Corporate Plan Service Priorities:
- Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active.
 - Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 Members of the Blue Badge community, representatives of 50 organisations for people with disabilities, representatives from the Physical Disabilities and Sensory Needs Forum and Access and Disabilities Working Group were invited to a meeting to introduce the

SIMON project and to recruit testers to give feedback. Many people at the meeting welcomed the project and as a result around 30 testers from the Blue Badge community were recruited. The Council would ideally like to recruit as many more testers as are willing to get involved and test the Smartphone App. Testers can sign up on the website at <http://simon-project.eu/pilot-test-in-reading/>

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The role of Reading Borough Council as a pilot city in the SIMON Project has been set out in a funding agreement.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 The Council has carried out an equality impact assessment scoping exercise, and considers that the proposals do not have a direct negative impact on any groups with protected characteristics and should benefit at least some of the Blue Badge community.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 All street works, technical work on the Smartphone App and staff time are solely funded by the SIMON EU Project funded by the EU.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Further details of the SIMON EU Project can be found at: <http://simon-project.eu/project/>

10.2 The Smartphone App can be downloaded for free and is available to anyone at: <http://simon-project.eu/pilot-test-in-reading/>