
Walk Hack

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1 Introduction

What is a hack?

A hack is pulling a problem apart and developing prototype solutions to that problem, testing and adjusting the prototype in response to feedback.

The Walk Hack was a partnership was formed between Sustrans Scotland (Sustrans) at City of Edinburgh Council's City Centre Neighbourhood Partnership (CCNP). I led Sustrans' involvement. The whole Walk Hack process took approximately twelve months from August 2015 – August 2016. Further networking events have continued beyond August 2016 until March 2017.

Sustrans and the CCNP had two key drivers.

Firstly, the Local Community Plan (2014-17) developed by the CCNP following engagement with the city centre community had “getting about the city centre by foot and by bike” as a key priority. The partnership had a joint vested interest in developing an event to increase walking and encourage more walking behaviour by people in the city centre. This element concerned the behaviour of people in the city centre.

Secondly, Sustrans and the CCNP had an aspiration to have a joint innovation day on behaviour change; both organisations had the desire to “do something different”, try something a bit experimental, especially to encourage professionals to try different approaches to engagement and ideas generation.

2 Background to this paper

Inspired by work supporting creative industries in Edinburgh to foster collaborative innovation, the partnership of Sustrans and CCNP were interested in investigating a similar approach for people involved in disciplines that in one way or another influence how people move around the city.

The partners wanted to include people who are involved with transport, active travel, place-making and walking for health, either professionally or personally. The partners also wanted to invite “the unusual suspects”, people who are not already engaged with this topic/agenda.

Sustrans and CCNP formed a strong collaboration and worked with staff based at Snook, a service design agency to bring Walk Hack to Edinburgh. Snook had a previous track record of developing Cycle Hack and running “hacks” in other settings.

CCNP was able to access funding from CEC's Smarter Choices Smarter Places funding allocation from Transport Scotland to run Walk Hack collaborating with Sustrans and Snook.

With the help of the funding the partnership was able to bring people together not only to develop behaviour change projects, but also to try out different ways to influence their behaviour in a professional capacity – how they work with colleagues and communities, how they design or how they approach challenges.

2.1 Initial aims

Our initial aims were to:

- Support people to work together and develop innovative creative solutions to challenges of increasing walking in the city centre;

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- Inform people about new and stimulating approaches to behaviour change projects;
 - Create a space where people interested in how we/they all move around Edinburgh could meet and make new connections; and to
 - Deliver three projects designed collaboratively by the participants.

Walk Hack aimed to encourage behaviour change equally in two ways:

- Professional behaviour – taking part in Walk Hack would support and inspire employees to use collaborative problem solving, innovative thinking and rapid-prototyping approaches in their work lives; and
- Walking behaviour – the emphasis throughout Walk Hack would be on investigating and developing projects which change/encouraged people’s walking behaviour in the city centre.

Walk Hack comprised of a series of events, the key one being a two-day “hack” where, participants were invited to watch a series of films and listen to speakers. Participants were engaged through facilitated activities that led to the development of ideas and prototype solutions. These ranged from a weather tracker display for bus stops to signs encouraging pedestrians to “take that street” or “look up”. These prototypes were tested “in real life” out on the streets of Edinburgh and then the prototypes were improved and adapted in response to feedback from people engaged on the street.

During the development of Walk Hack the two lead organisations were learning about how to run a hack and how people and networks develop ideas collaboratively.

2.2 What happened at Walk Hack?

The images below illustrate and convey the essence of the Walk Hack event held in October 2015

Image 1 : Learning about at the barriers to walking in the City Centre of Edinburgh from staff at Snook



Image 2: A presentation by Edinburgh World Heritage Trust on the “hidden gems” in Edinburgh city centre.

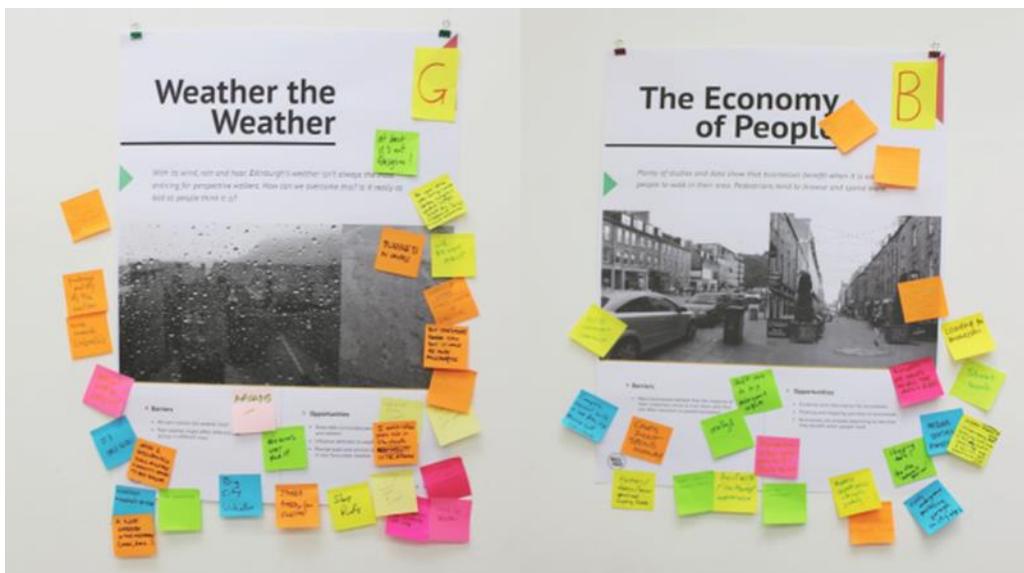


Challenges were developed by Snook with input from CCNP and Sustrans based on knowledge of the city centre of Edinburgh. They provided a starting point for the Walk Hack audience and stimulated thoughts and ideas about potential solutions. Participants were encouraged to form teams around each of these challenges and come up with one solution for their chosen challenge.

Challenges posed by Snook

- A. Small streets and Shortcuts
- B. Businesses vs Pedestrians
- C. Bigger and Busier
- D. Time to Walk
- E. The Square Route
- F. Grassmarket
- G. Weather the Weather
- H. East & West, Old & New
- I. The Economy of People

Image 3: Two of the nine challenges focussed on the particular issues facing people on foot in Edinburgh.



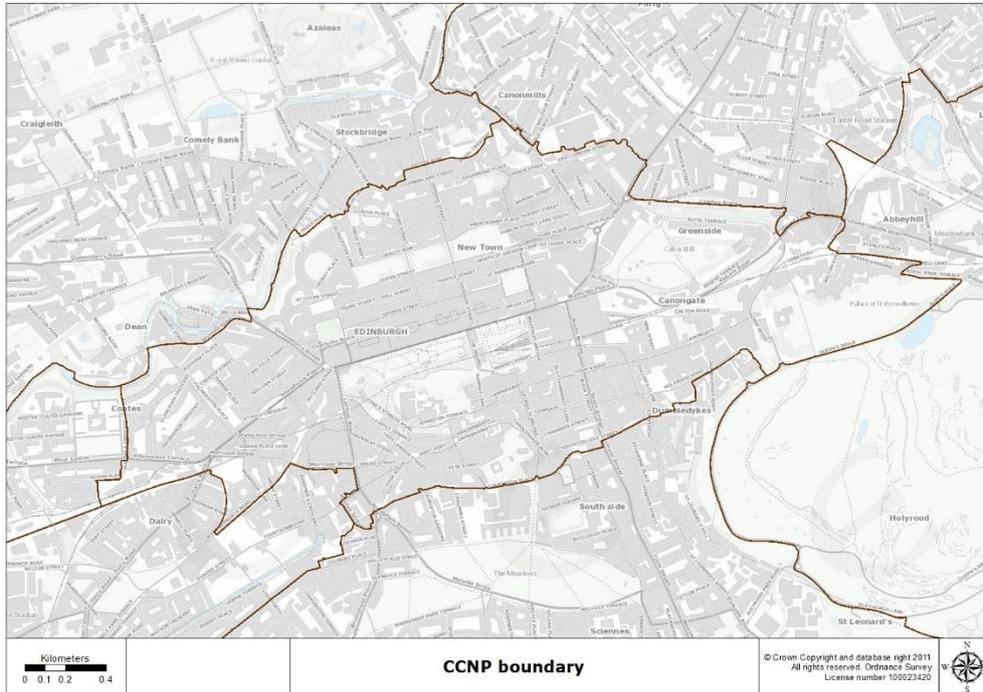


Image 4: the boundary of the City Centre Neighbourhood Partnership area.

Participants were then strongly encouraged to build prototype solutions and test these on the streets of Edinburgh with real people. Images below show participants creating the models of their solutions.

Image 5,6,7,8: Prototypes being developed in response to the “challenges” posed.



Below are some images of prototype designs on the streets of Edinburgh, 5 out of the 6 projects tested their ideas “in real life”. People passing by were observed interacting with the prototypes and then questioned to get feedback.

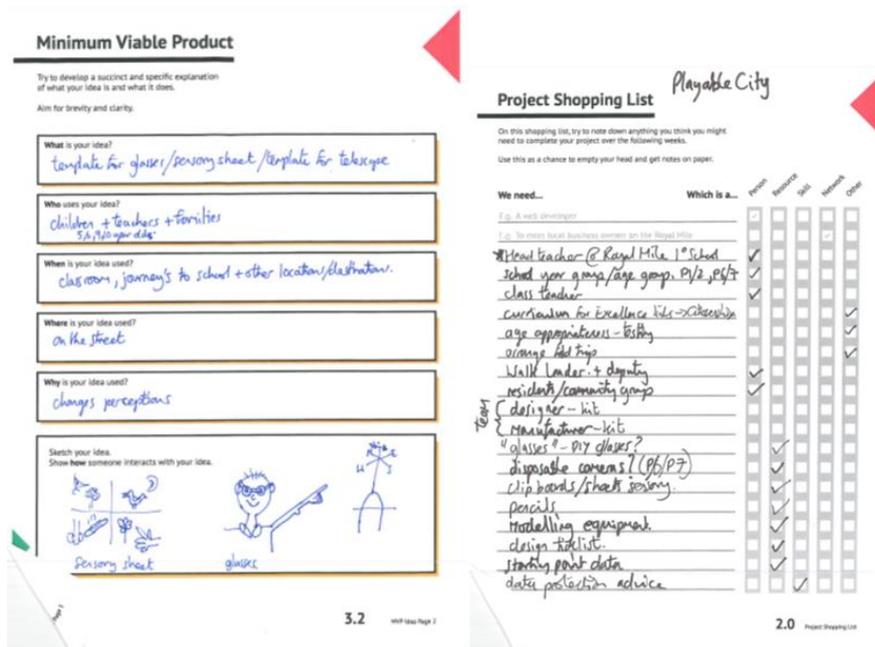
Image 9,10; Below are some images of prototype designs on the streets of Edinburgh. People passing by were observed interacting with the prototypes and then encouraged to give feedback.



Figure 1: Table of projects developed from the Walk Hack event

Project Name	Project Description	
HQ - Closes	Making the Closes off the Royal Mile more attractive thorough-fares through community engagement, cleaning up and lighting	#HQCloses
True Walk	An app for walkers that conveys the 3D nature of the city centre of Edinburgh	#ElevateEdinburgh
Look!	Installing frames, mirrors and signs in selected key locations in the city centre as means to get people to explore their city more and with new perspectives	#LookEdinburgh
Walking Station	A number of walking stations in the city centre which served as rest points and incorporated real-time weather information	#walkingstation
Playable City	A simple low cost tool kit for schools and pupils to identify features of interest on their walk to school	#edinburghplaycitywalks
Play Out Grassmarket!	A temporary shelter in the Grassmarket for family-orientated activities and residencies	#payoutGrassmarket

At the next event (January 2016) - the Development Day – held at Sustrans Scotland, approximately 30 participants were encouraged to take these 6 ideas and supported to develop detailed project plans on how they would be implemented in the city centre of Edinburgh. Pedestrian counters were acquired by the Walk Hack lead organisations which could be deployed near to the final projects locations to gather quantitative data on walking levels. Project planning tools brought by Snook were used, including the Minimal Viable Product sheet and a Project Shopping List – see below;



In April 2016 - to share the learning from the Walk Hack process we held two celebration and showcase events at Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation.

2.2.1 Key Impacts

Aligned to the original aims the partners conclude that these are the key impacts;

Support people to work together and develop innovative creative solutions:

- Provided five opportunities for professionals & local community members to work together on co-design projects;
- Projects provide evidence of group work & creativity.

Inform people about innovative and creative approaches to behaviour change projects:

- Feedback from events, and #walkhack discussion on twitter highlighted inspirational speakers and programme, as well as acknowledging collaborative and creative opportunity.

Create a space where people interested in how we all move around Edinburgh could meet and make new connections:

- Established new partnerships with University of Edinburgh ('Design for Informatics' students participated in Walk Hack and 'Participation in Policy and Planning' course topic developed from it);
- Connections have resulted in CCNP and Sustrans Scotland leads sharing skills and knowledge, for example participation in Edinburgh University's Experiential Learning workshop.

Deliver three projects designed collaboratively by the participants.

1. Two teams have been enabled and empowered to work across organisations and develop projects (LOOK! [Project 1] and Playable City [Project 2]);
2. Discussion at the Development Day led to a number of ideas influencing Edinburgh World Heritage Trust's Twelve Closes project [Project 3];
3. Improved perception of Sustrans Scotland and CCNP as innovators has led to involvement in other internal and external opportunities;
4. All participants were given the chance to take their ideas to City of Edinburgh Council's data and technology hack - Edinburgh Apps in February 2016;
5. Four student teams from Edinburgh University's Design for Informatics course built on the two day hack to develop their projects further and present to the City Centre Neighbourhood Partnership.

2.2.2 Lessons learned

People and Networks

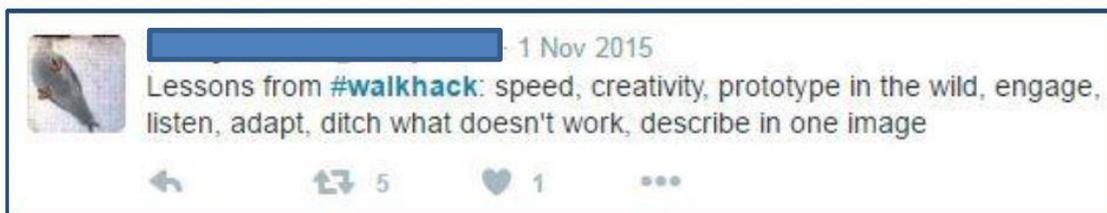
- The participants identified they are keen to explore new and different ways of working as professionals leading and as community members taking part, but sometimes it can be difficult for them to find the time and support to do this.
- The participants enjoyed taking part in a process where all views were considered equal and valid.
- The feedback we received at the focus group indicated there is a strong desire from the city centre community to be kept informed about events that include active travel, place making and innovation elements. Often these are focused on one particular sector, eg. architecture and

people feel that unless you are professionally connected with that network it's hard to find out what is happening.

- The variety of participants, recruited through a range of social media networks, meant that teams had a mixture of skills and knowledge. This was beneficial for initiating the projects but more of a challenge to ask people to commit to taking ideas forward.
- Participants appreciated an opportunity to think outside the box and bring creativity into their work.

The Process

- The Walk Hack journey was left unstructured from the start to allow the process to evolve. This worked well, allowing response to feedback and test approaches.
- Delivery of projects needs commitment, including funding. This would work well in established teams but there was still value in Walk Hack even if projects were not realised immediately – a number of them are still 'live'.
- Linking in to other existing opportunities for delivery of projects can be a useful way to embed the process (e.g. Edinburgh Apps, Twelve Closes Project).
- There has been value in the process as well as the projects that came out of that process – sharing ideas, joint working, networking, informal learning, collaboration, inspiration...
- Rapid prototyping is an inspiring way to develop ideas into projects (see tweets below), and could work in a number of settings. This was a new way of working for a number of the people involved and required more of a culture shift than expected.
- Spin off projects came from different angles – the project team needed to be open to opportunity! Also to realise when we were at a dead end and move on quickly.
- Two key factors helped us to develop the hack - support from experienced facilitators/service designers - Snook, and working in partnership CCNP and Sustrans. These were essential to build the trust and commitment to the whole project.





The Challenges running Walk Hack

- *Momentum*

It can be hard to maintain momentum over a period of 12 months when the journey is not defined. When people are in a room together a lot can be achieved but after participatory events are completed it can be hard to keep things going without good communication.

Maintaining commitment from people of the duration is a challenge, some people were involved in their spare time and a long term commitment to a project is difficult to establish.

- *Measuring impact: Quantitative*

The project team received pedestrian counters on a short term loan which could be situated at key locations close to where projects were installed and used to monitor before/after footfall. Unfortunately, within the timescale that we had access to the counters, none of the walking projects reached a point where the counters could be installed and changes in walking levels monitored.

- *Measuring impact: Qualitative*

We used anecdotal evidence and feedback forms to record behaviours in those involved in designing for walking; for example, some people who attended the hack told us they have been applying the rapid prototyping method in their professional lives.

- *Resistance to the hack process*

By calling the project “Walk Hack” we inspired one potential target audience – as evidenced by the number of students and young people who attended, but also risked alienating another potential sectors of the community– some concern about the validity of using hacks was expressed on social media.

- *Our perceptions*

Sustrans Scotland’s and City Centre Neighbourhood Partnership’s learning developed in line with that of the other participants. The partnership monitored responses and feedback to each event, and tried not to predict what people would be interested in.

- *Resources*

Embedding the administration of the projects in existing teams was essential and requires negotiation and support. Commitment, roles, responsibilities and governance arrangements had to be established at the start of the project.

- *Working with key staff*

We were keen to involve decision makers and influencers at all levels of responsibility, and thought that offering a free, participative, innovative event would naturally appeal to them. Some people chose not to engage and further work to understand why this would be useful.

2.3 Conclusions

Both City Centre Neighbourhood Partnership and Sustrans Scotland have found it an interesting process with a steep learning curve. Walk Hack did achieve most of what we set out to do;

Learning

How to run a hack and some professional behaviour change.

The organisers would have liked the walking prototype projects to progress further but this needed sustained time and money.

Hacking is an effective way of engaging a variety of people. Walk Hack did reach out to sectors of the community not engaged with the active travel agenda, for example design students. The city centre is a particularly challenging area of the city to get much community engagement because although a lot of people use or travel through the city centre there are few local residents.

Rapid prototyping is an effective way to come up with and test ideas without investing too much initially.

Further learning

- It is important to invite the unusual suspects
- Point people in the right direction and don't be afraid where they go with it watch and see what happens, let go of the process
- Hard to maintain the energy of participants in the room, to get tangible outcomes
- Important to follow-up projects with support and funding

2.4 Next steps

What have I done personally with what I learned at Walk Hack?

- Practised rapid prototyping with projects I manage, moved from discussing ideas to developing a solution faster.
- Took learning to a specific target audience; Big Spin Challenge, developing a project by co-designing with pupils and teachers at Lochaber High School.
- Shared the project planning tools with colleagues– such as the Minimal Viable Product, project shopping list
- Presented a webinar on Walk Hack to rest of Sustrans staff across the UK

Where did we go from here?

“Piggy-backing” onto events; Fire-starter Festival (Scottish Government) – tried to keep momentum going through additional events. The focus of the Fire-starter Walk Hack event was sharing recent international research into walking and show a couple of inspirational films. One was about a consultancy company in based in London - Space Syntax who help cities around the world become more walkable. Another film shown was about the GirlTrek walking movement in the US which is empowering black American women and girls to walk more every day.

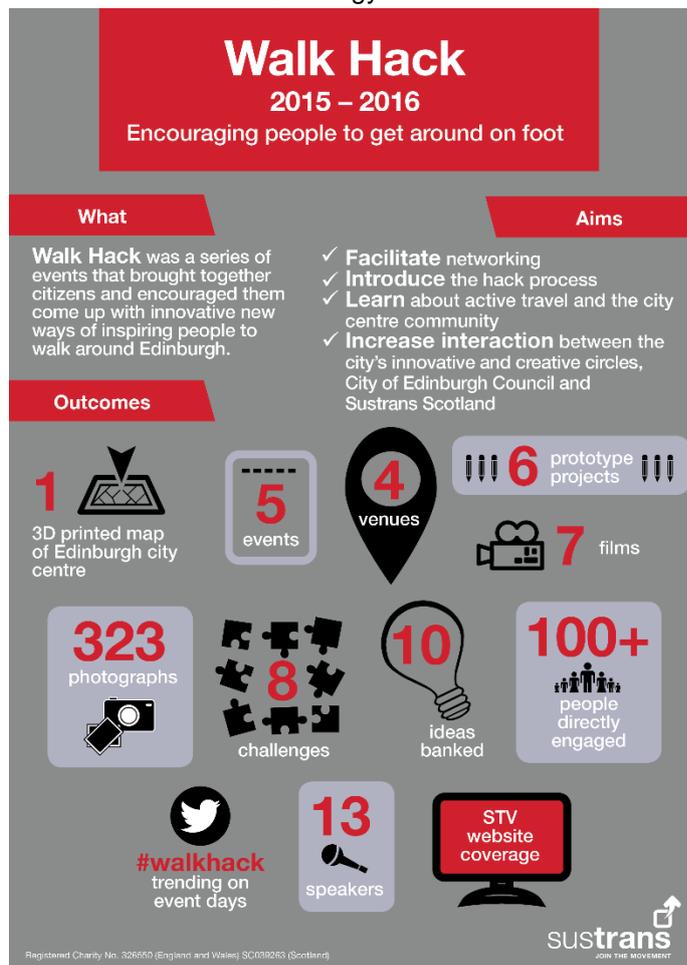
Sustrans Scotland is applying hack/rapid prototyping technique to engaging with students and staff at HFE establishments as part of Sustrans work programme. We felt this would be a good way to engage this age group and demographic in the topic such as in Lochaber High School project.

Sustrans Scotland is hoping to run an annual hack style innovation event in Edinburgh and develop hack-style events for other locations, around the theme of increasing walking in the city centre, will depend on the results of the City of Edinburgh Council's re-structuring process.

Why consider running a hack?

In theory you can "hack" anything. Consider hacking your particular area of transport. It can give you;

- Fresh thinking and new perspectives
- New solutions
- Creative thinking
- Improvements from the users perspective
- Community engagement
- Better designed services
- Saves time and energy



Acknowledgements

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