

CASE STUDY



PedalAid

An increasingly popular app for cyclists using the Island's Red Squirrel Trail, which tracks their journeys and generates donations for local charities.



The PedalAid app tracks the mobile phones of its users, to log cycling trips along the Island's Red Squirrel Trail. The app was launched in 2017, and initially recorded journeys on the Trail between Cowes and Newport. In 2018 coverage was extended to capture journeys made by app users along all 32 kilometres of the Trail, which also connects Blackwater, Wroxall, Alverstone, Sandown and Shanklin.

App users raise money for charity – with each kilometre they ride along the route raising money (donated by a local business) for a nominated Island-based charity. If users collectively reach the month's 'Charity Challenge' overall distance target then that month's donation is doubled. So far nominated charities have received over £12,000 (between £100 and £750 each) and the Charity Challenge has been met 17 times.

The app also contains a guide with information about the Trail, things to do and see, and historical information. It allows users to see where they are on the monthly leader board, see how many calories they have burnt, and to form teams with friends.

Everyone who cycles at least 10km along the route in a month is entered into a prize draw. The 20 cyclists who log the most kilometres in the month are entered into a special 'top 20' prize draw. The prizes are donated by the local businesses which sponsor the app.

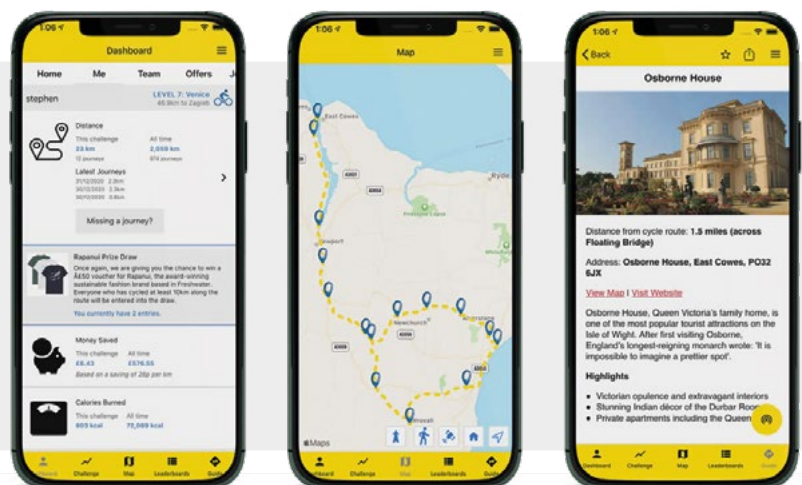
App Stats

The app was designed as an engaging way to encourage more cycling, while also capturing data about users and journeys on key parts of the Island's cycle network. In addition to helping local charities, it also supports local businesses – which donate to the prize draw and offer discounts to app users.

Growth in use of the app has continued steadily since it was launched (see Figure 1). It has been downloaded 2,333 times and has 937 registered users – which is equal to more than 1% of the Island's adult population, and more than 6% of all residents who cycle for leisure.²⁷ It is particularly well used by recreational cyclists, who make up half of all users (48%). A quarter use it for both recreational and commuting journeys (25%), and a quarter for commuter journeys only (26%). Men are more likely to download the app than women (63% of users compared to 37%), reflecting the general gender imbalance in cycling.

Over the four years the app has been live, its users have logged 16,352 cycle journeys, covering 103,853km; equivalent to travelling 2.5 times around the Earth. Of these, approximately 40,300km were cycled on commuter journeys – which would have avoided about 4.5 tonnes CO_{2e} if each of these trips replaced a car journey.

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²⁷ Based on 16,900 people estimated to have cycled for leisure at least once in the previous 28 days by the [Active Lives Survey](#) in November 2019 to November 2020.

PedalAid and the Pandemic

There was a small increase in the number of people downloading the app in Summer 2020, during the height of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, but this was no more significant than the increase in downloads which occurred in 2018, when the app was extended to cover the full length of the Trail (see Figure 1).

In 2020/21 **the number of journeys logged on the app decreased by about 10%** compared to 2019/20 (see Figure 2). This is likely to be because trips logged by new users, or additional recreational trips made by existing users, were offset by a significant proportion of the 50% of users who log commuting journeys with the app having transferred to home working, and therefore no longer logging two trips on days they had previously cycled to work.

Conversely, between 2019/20 and 2020/21 **the app recorded a 22% increase in the total distance cycled** by its users (see Figure 2). This means the cycle trips that were being recorded by the app, although fewer in number, were over longer distances. On average about 2km longer. This suggests app users were logging a greater proportion of longer distance recreational trips (which are typically a round trip and recorded as one journey, as opposed to two for a commuter trip to work and back).

These longer distances mean that, on average, an app user cycled for an extra 8.5 minutes per trip in 2020/21 – an increase of a third on 2019/20 (from less than 24 minutes to more than 32 minutes).²⁸

Overall, using the app as a proxy for cycling habits by the Island's residents, this suggests that during the pandemic **more people were cycling, for recreation, over longer distances** – generating greater health and well-being benefits from each trip.

Figure 1: PedalAid App Downloads (cumulative)

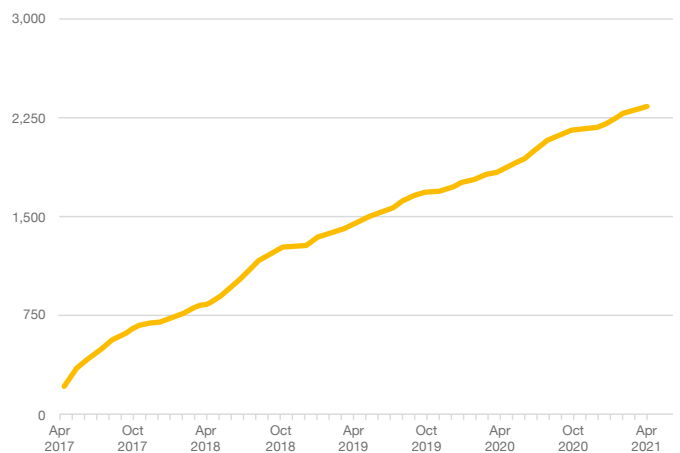
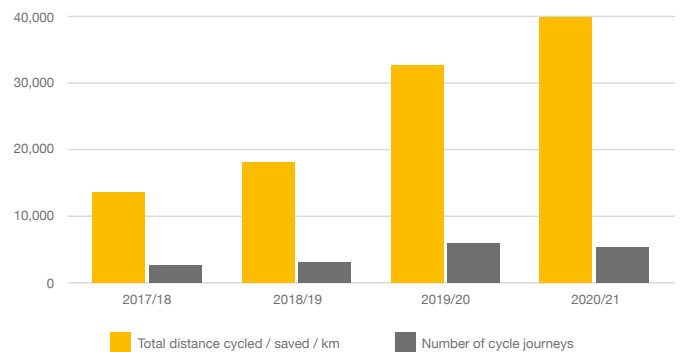


Figure 2: PedalAid Total Journeys and Distance Cycled by Year



To find out more visit:
www.pedalaid.org

²⁸ Based on 14km per hour average cycle speed - from World Health Organisation HEAT tool.