

# case study

## Liftshare.com

### Reducing commuter traffic by use of car sharing software project

#### Project Summary

**Problem:** Car sharing software designed to cut solo driving exists but to date take-up has been limited.

**Solution:** A personalised travel planning tool could greatly encourage car-sharing by commuters.

#### Partnership

- University of East Anglia, 5\*\* rated School of Environmental Sciences
- Liftshare.com, founded by Ali Clabburn in 1987
- Norfolk County Council (NCC)
- Norwich Union (NU)

Liftshare.com now has an estimated 90 per cent of the UK car-sharing market, having set up more than 600 schemes, with 80,000 members saving an estimated 12,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum. It is estimated however that uptake could increase tenfold, leading to a further saving of around 100,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum in existing schemes alone.

#### Inspiration

Take-up for car-sharing schemes has remained stubbornly low. If average UK car occupancy levels rise from 1.7 people to two people, then the possible CO<sub>2</sub> reduction would be up to nine million tonnes per year.

There are two main reasons why car-sharing schemes have not taken off:

- 1 **Lack of awareness of schemes among potential users**, compounded by perceptions that car-sharing creates problems for the individual driver.
- 2 **Lack of awareness of financial benefits:** employer organisations are frequently unaware that savings can be made by cutting parking spaces. According to the Department for Transport, annually, parking costs employers between £300 and £500 per space.

Working in partnership with Liftshare.com, the partners will develop a personalised travel planning tool for sale to organisations seeking to promote work-based car-sharing. The tool will have significant value to Liftshare.com and will generate a return to Carbon Connections. The partners will also seek to identify the barriers that presently keep uptake of lift-sharing schemes at a low level.

#### Innovation

This project is innovative because it goes beyond the simple installation of lift-sharing software, which to date characterises the majority of the UK's 600 schemes. It will produce information and new products to accelerate take-up of lift-sharing. The project will also seek to understand the manner in which RFID (radio Frequency ID) technology can be used to assist take-up and monitoring of lift-sharing. The project will also build on Norwich Union's efforts to cut car use. As NU is an insurance company with a direct interest in innovative schemes to lower costs to motorists, it has already rolled out the first pay-by-mile car insurance scheme in the UK, which is experiencing increasing uptake.

#### Development

The carbon savings associated with increased car-sharing will be estimated for the three locations in the project: UEA, NCC and Broadland Business Park Norwich. These calculations will provide essential supporting information for management and for development of green travel packages.

**Carbon Connections** is HEIF-funded investment project utilising £3 million for carbon reduction activities. Based at the UEA, Carbon Connections supports innovative projects in carbon reduction using a partnership model. The aim is to facilitate knowledge transfer between universities and research laboratories and the business community to speed commercial development of carbon-saving projects, whether technological or behavioural in focus.

