Pedestrianisation and walkability in Pontevedra in Spain

Where is it and what did they do?

Pontevedra in north-west Spain has a population of 83,000 with a high population density and is famous for its historic centre. The city struggled with congestion and a road infrastructure not built for heavy car use. To tackle the challenges, **Pontevedra implemented an ambitious plan to pedestrianise the city centre and allow car access for residents and services only.**

The process began in 1999 in the old town and was combined with upgrades to the sewage, restoration of historical sites and other public realm infrastructure. The area pedestrianised increased in the following years, and in 2010 the city set a **maximum speed limit of 30km/h, with 10km/h for vehicles in the centre.**

What was the result?

Traffic entering the Pontevedra reduced by **92%** in the centre, **77%** in the inner city and **53%** across the whole city. Maps demonstrate the city's walkability by depicting the link to public transit routes and the distances and average walking times between key locations.

Much evaluation has been done on the impact of the pedestrianisation project. Since 1999 there have been no fatal traffic casualties in the pedestrianised area, and only three across the city since 2007. In the city, **carbon emissions decreased by 66%** between 1999 and 2014. There was a **7% increase in offered jobs** between 1997 and 2015. Most significantly, residents and visitors are positive about the city and the **local economy has thrived in the transformed areas.**

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What was learnt?

The lower speed limits and reduced car numbers mean that cars, pedestrians, and bikes can co-exist in city spaces without causing problems. This means there is no need for bike paths or segregated infrastructure. Cyclists are expected to respect walkers, slowing down or getting off the bike when there are large numbers of pedestrians.

Establishing good public lighting and urban furniture is necessary to create a safe environment, where the public space becomes an extension of the private space. Analysing how street design influences decision making, this city has moulded its urban areas so that cars are seen as entering the pedestrian space, not the other way around.

Pontevedra demonstrates the importance of an ambitious vision for sustainable travel in the town centre, a strong political will, and a vision to succeed.

Further links or information

- Fewer cars more city
- Pontevedra - pedestrian
- Pontevedra local government