Apps to make crossing the road safer

The council's Edinburgh Apps Hackathon had road safety on the agenda when it met last week. The idea was to devise some way of ensuring greater safety and road awareness for pupils moving from primary school up to secondary when they might have to walk further to get to school, along unfamiliar roads and streets.

Edinburgh Apps Road Safety Hackathon brought together web designers, developers and programmers to pitch hi-tech solutions created using data made available by the Council and partner organisations.

The proposals to help raise safety awareness in pedestrians and other road users included a multi-level computer game to teach road safety and a heat map showing the severity and location of incidents.

But it was the creators of two apps – one rating the safety of crossing places and the other rewarding individuals for making use of pedestrian crossings on busy roads – that caught the imaginations of the judges.

City of Edinburgh Council's Digital Economy Champion Councillor Frank Ross, who opened and helped judge the three-day event held at the University of Edinburgh's School of Informatics, praised the high-quality entries.

Councillor Ross said: "We saw a fantastic range of ideas over the weekend demonstrating the relevance of new technology to everyday life in Edinburgh. It was exciting to witness creative thinking in action amongst participants, who made inventive use of Council and partner data to promote road safety.

“EdinburghApps is a valuable new event for the city and I look forward to watching winning entries being developed into useful solutions.”

The Road Safety Hackathon is one of a number of events held by the Council’s EdinburghApps project, which focuses on bringing new, innovative ideas to life through technology and last October held the city’s first civic challenge event.

The hackathon, in partnership with Transport for Edinburgh and the Streets Ahead campaign, aimed to tackle the issue of accidents involving pedestrians, caused by people not looking properly or becoming distracted.

Hackers were challenged to use data to find ways of informing road users, raising road safety awareness and educating pedestrians, particularly children, who are considered most vulnerable. They used three sessions, helped by Council officers, to come up with apps, product concepts or websites before pitching ideas to judges on Sunday.

Ian Craig, Chief Executive of Transport for Edinburgh, said:- “Safety is our number one priority, which is why we have invested heavily over the years in driver training and other initiatives. It’s also why we’ve supported this event. We really enjoyed seeing what new insights and solutions this 21st century approach can provide for the age-old challenge of keeping all road users safe.”

Winners, who were judged on a number of criteria including the originality of their idea, the benefits it would have for citizens and the quality of their pitches, were announced on Sunday, and will now work with the Council to look into the potential for developing their apps.

Students Anaïs Moisy, Neil Wilkie and Clement Mouchet won with their concept Creative Incentives, which focused on making pedestrian crossings more appealing for all road users, from turning the crossing into a game for children to incorporating art for adults.

Interior design student Anaïs said: “I like the concept of changing behaviour on streets and roads and really enjoyed meeting new people and making contacts as part of the event. I didn’t expect to win – this topic is just something I’m interested in.”

16-year-old winner Martha Gilmore was also awarded for her mobile app rating the safety of crossing places using GPS.

She said: “Showing people the numbers of accidents at a crossing as they stand there is a way of shocking them into thinking about road safety. EdinburghApps allowed me hear views and opinions I wouldn’t usually get to hear. Plus, road safety is something which affects everyone.”

Find out more about future events on the EdinburghApps website .