

29<sup>th</sup> November 2007

**CAUGHT  
SHORT  
IN WESTMINSTER?**



### **Westminster unveils UK's first ever loo search via mobile phone technology**

Westminster City Council is today (29/11/07) launching the UK's first ever text service to help people find their nearest loo using pioneering 'SatLav' technology.

In a bold move to stop anybody ever being caught short again, the council is harnessing the power of mobile phone technology similar to GPS systems to locate the nearest toilets to wherever they text from.

If nature calls just text "toilet" to 80097 and you will be texted back the details of your nearest loo within a matter of seconds.

Student Gail Knight came up with the idea for an innovation competition run by Westminster City Council while she was writing her Masters dissertation called 'Public Toilets: a Woman's Place'.

Gail, 26, who lives in Clapham Junction, said: "In London people spend so much time away from their home working, commuting or shopping. When I am out with friends we are always ducking in McDonalds or department stores to use their loos but we feel a bit bad about it.

"I started remembering where Westminster's services were and always found them perfectly adequate but lots of people were wary of them or didn't know about them. I thought a text service would be really useful for people on the move."

Councillor Alan Bradley, Cabinet member for Street Environment, said: "Westminster already has an unrivalled, award-winning provision of public toilets, placing us far ahead of any other local authority in the country. But this truly ground-breaking initiative shows we're always looking for new, innovative ways to improve our service. From today onwards nobody should ever get caught short again, and we understand how important that is, be it for a young mum with children in tow, older people or friends on a shopping trip or a night out.

"We have been opening and refurbishing more toilets at a time when many areas have seen a reduction, and we will continue to invest in toilet provision across the city, but especially in the West End which is vitally important in helping to keep our streets clean and safe during weekends and late at night."

Robert Thurner, Commercial Director of Incentivated, which created the technology to pin-point users and their nearest toilet by matching postcodes, said: "By employing the latest mobile technology, councils like Westminster Council are helping to make residents' lives easier. Whether they want to pay the congestion charge via their mobile or use location based services to find their nearest recycling centres or licensed minicabs, mobile can offer an immediate solution, at any time and anywhere. We applaud Westminster Council for adding text-public conveniences to their list of services and look forward to working with them in the future."

The toilets where SatLav is being launched have just undergone a £300,000 refurbishment, boasting an array of facilities including baby changing facilities and a clean and safe environment.

The text will cost users 25p with the council paying a further 9p to cover the cost of the service. Users will then receive details of the nearest toilet and opening times. The service covers 40 council-run and leased toilets in the city as well as other public conveniences operated by the GLA and London Underground. In addition, a number of Oxford Street stores - Marks & Spencer, Debenhams and House of Fraser - and the Cardinal Place shopping centre in Victoria are listing their toilet facilities through the scheme.

As well as our regular conveniences, we provide temporary urinals in the West End on weekends. This measure alone prevents more than 10,000 gallons (45,460 litres) of wee ending up in alleyways each year. This latest scheme is expected to make another substantial impact on reducing street urination.

#### **Notes to Editors:**

Westminster spends £3million a year maintaining toilets. We have 53 council-run and leased toilet facilities across the city, including 12 temporary units placed outside in the West End every Friday and Saturday night. The temporary units are not included in the SatLav scheme.

There are now more public toilets in Westminster than any time in the last 20 years.

Westminster has more toilets winning awards from the British Toilet Association than any other English local authority.

While the number of public toilets across the UK has fallen by about a third in the last five years, Westminster has heavily invested in its provision, including spending £600,000 refurbishing free public toilets at Oxford Circus and Piccadilly Circus.

Latest figures reveal that an amazing 15m people visit our council conveniences each year, equivalent to three times the population of Scotland.

In September, the city council opened the capital's first "toilet-pod", a bespoke toilet-come-art gallery in St Anne's Gardens, Wardour Street, Soho. The £52,000 egg-shaped pod was specifically designed for local children, community groups and disabled users whose use of the park would otherwise be restricted and will feature regular exhibitions by children and local artists.

In May, the city council announced extra short-stay parking provision exclusively for cab drivers so they could answer the call of nature in private. The 32 bays in Westminster, Regency Street, Bolsover Street and Paddington Street, are positioned close to public toilets, pubs and restaurants with drivers paying 20p for a 12-minute stop.

Our "pisoir" open-air lavatories - the first to be installed in Britain for over a century - are in regular use at four sites in the West End from 8pm until 6am on weekends. These are not included in SatLav.

#### **About Incentivated**

Incentivated works with brands, the public sector and charities to help them communicate with customers instantly and easily via their mobile phones.

We develop and manage mobile marketing and advertising campaigns and services on local, national and international levels. We reach people in all corners of the world and in many languages, using text messaging, mobile internet and all other mobile data formats.

We believe the mobile phone is an intensely private medium. Respecting this principle, our campaigns provide information that consumers find useful and welcome.

Founded in 2001, Incentivated's fast growing client base includes British Airways, Carphone Warehouse, Central Office of Information, Macmillan Cancer Support, Masterfoods, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Scottish Power, Transport for London and VisitBritain.

For more information please visit: <http://www.incentivated.com>

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