

In 2010 Sheffield Hallam University employed City ID; a team of urbanist planners and designers, with a global reputation for improving the legibility and experience of cities and transport systems (City ID, 2014) to develop a unique design, and wayfinding solution to integrate people, movement and places throughout the university. The report uncovered many inaccuracies and contradictory information throughout many of the universities buildings; through its signage, branding and wayfinding. Students and staff were tested to navigate the building using the current signage, maps, and web apps, and many found it extremely difficult to navigate, even with the aid of a map. It is evident that the wayfinding strategies in place throughout Sheffield Hallam University are not very intuitive, and students find it extremely difficult to navigate.

With this in mind, the purpose of this project was to investigate into alternative way finding strategies and their design language, and to devise a solution that would easily communicate to new users of a building where an exit or arterial route may be found, which is currently unintuitive and difficult to navigate.

The project led to a prototype floor tile that aims to guide users to the nearest exit, especially in the case of a fire, when current emergency exit signage may be obscured from smoke. The tile uses a directional-ridged profile, enabling users to navigate its direction either through a cane, by touch or sight. A key challenge was to seek an aesthetically pleasing design that could fit into any existing scheme, whilst having its function at the forefront.

In collaboration with the Sheffield Royal Society of the Blind, the project was co-designed through the process of workshops, questionnaires and activities, allowing on-going user input and advise. Thorough material testing allowed exploration into various finishes, aesthetics and practicalities.

The project was exhibited at Clerkenwell Design Week 2016, which allowed visitors to interact with the prototype tiles. Many of the industries leading flooring manufacturers attended the show offering valuable feedback and conversation about manufacturing possibilities.

City ID (2010). *Way finding Strategy Report*. Sheffield Hallam University.