

## World cities turn their streets over to walkers and cyclists

### Level 3 • Advanced

#### 1 Warmer

Which countries are these cities in?

1. Vancouver \_\_\_\_\_
2. Berlin \_\_\_\_\_
3. Minneapolis \_\_\_\_\_
4. Budapest \_\_\_\_\_
5. Adelaide \_\_\_\_\_
6. Bogotá \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

**crammed**  
**bollard**

**rat-running**  
**disruptive**

**congestion**  
**vulnerable**

**precedent**  
**collate**

**lockdown**  
**exhaust**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is a situation in which people are not allowed to leave their homes.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ on a vehicle is the pipe that carries gases out of the engine.
3. If a place is \_\_\_\_\_, it is completely filled with people or things.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is when people drive along small roads at busy times of the day in order to avoid traffic on main roads.
5. If you \_\_\_\_\_ information you have collected, you arrange it in a sensible order.
6. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an action or event in the past that is used as an example or reason for a present action or event.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is a situation in which a place is crowded with people or vehicles so that it is difficult to move around.
8. If something is described as \_\_\_\_\_, it causes difficulties that interrupt something or prevent it from continuing normally.
9. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a short post used for stopping cars from driving into an area.
10. A \_\_\_\_\_ person is weak or easy to hurt physically or mentally.

#### 3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. Which city has proposed 130km of temporary bike lanes?
2. By what percentage has traffic on main roads fallen in London during the lockdown?
3. Which city is planning to close 74 miles of roads?
4. Which city has seen a 40% increase in the number of people using parks?
5. How many people are believed to die each year in the UK because of air pollution?
6. By what percentage has bus use fallen in Budapest during the lockdown?

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*From Berlin to Bogotá, there are new footpaths and bike lanes – but not in London*

Laura Laker

11 April, 2020

- 1 A growing number of cities around the world are temporarily reallocating road space from cars to people on foot and on cycles to keep key workers moving and residents in coronavirus lockdown healthy and active while socially distancing. Limited urban park space and leisure trails are under increasing pressure, with many closed to prevent the spread of coronavirus, further limiting urban dwellers' access to outdoor space. While traffic has dropped around the world, and with it nitrogen dioxide levels, there are widespread concerns over a rise in speeding drivers endangering those walking and cycling.
- 2 Evidence suggests air pollution, including from exhaust fumes, significantly harms the survival chances of those with Covid-19. With pedestrians crammed onto narrow pavements and acres of empty asphalt on roads, lower speed limits, filtering residential streets to prevent rat-running, introducing emergency cycleways and expanding footpaths are among potential solutions.
- 3 Tabitha Combs, a lecturer at the University of North Carolina, is collating examples from around the world, adding to growing calls for more such measures. "No matter where a city is on the spectrum of supporting walking and bicycling, there are actions that are within their reach and precedents of those actions being implemented in peer cities around the globe," she says.
- 4 In Philadelphia, officials closed 4.7 miles of Martin Luther King Jr Drive, a wide riverside boulevard, to motor traffic on 20 March following a 1,100-strong petition, as leisure trails became overwhelmed by residents seeking their daily exercise. Minneapolis has closed part of its riverfront parkways to motor vehicles. Denver has introduced pop-up cycling and walking lanes on 16th and 11th Avenues to help people socially distance while exercising. Oakland officials recently announced they were planning to close 74 miles of roads – 10% of the city's total – to motor vehicles.
- 5 In Canada, Vancouver's park board announced that Stanley Park is now cycling and walking only to relieve congestion and stop visitors arriving by car and parking dangerously, amid a 40% increase in park users. In Winnipeg, four streets are restricted to cycling and walking from 8am to 8pm daily, and in Calgary, traffic lanes have been reallocated to cycling.
- 6 Like many cities, Budapest has seen a drop in bus use by almost 90%, with a 50% decrease in road traffic. City officials have now planned a cycling network on main roads. Sydney, Perth and Adelaide in Australia, Chapel Hill in the US and Calgary in Canada are among the cities that have made pedestrian crossings automatic in some districts so that people do not have to press a button.
- 7 In Berlin, a number of streets have new, wide bike lanes in place of some motor vehicle lanes. Bogotá has ambitiously replaced 35km of traffic lanes with new emergency bike lanes using temporary cones, mirroring the Colombian capital's bus rapid transit network, as an alternative to people using public transport. Workers adjust the lane width depending on usage. In late March, 130km of temporary bike lanes were proposed in Mexico City. In the meantime, a 1.7km temporary lane, running from 8am to 7pm, has been installed on a major thoroughfare.
- 8 In the UK, however, it is a very different picture. In London, where traffic has dropped by 63% on main roads, walking and cycling commissioner Will Norman says emergency bike routes on the city's arterial roads would not protect cyclists without complex junction improvements, which would require construction workers to travel during lockdown.
- 9 Cycling UK's policy director, Roger Geffen, has suggested junctions could be redesigned while roads are quieter, saying temporary cycling infrastructure "provides a good experience to new commuters, while using that kerb space when it's not under pressure and not as disruptive to make changes."
- 10 Hackney Council in east London is the first UK local authority openly planning to temporarily "filter" its streets, using bollards and planters to prevent rat-running while maintaining access for emergency vehicles and residents.

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- 11 Councillor Jon Burke said pedestrians stepping into the road to socially distance from one another are put at risk by speeding drivers, whose number appears to be increasing during the lockdown. He says construction workers can operate while socially distancing, and it is one sector with excess capacity during the pandemic.
- 12 “We are running around making sure vulnerable people have enough food, but we aren’t doing something about the 40,000 people that are dying each year because of air pollution,” he says. “We haven’t got weeks to deliver it. We need to deliver it now because this crisis is happening now.”
- 13 Dr Rachel Aldred, reader in transport at the University of Westminster, says the UK could learn from other countries. “It feels like they are treating cycling like a proper mode of transport and we are just fumbling around. There’s no guidance from the government. I think if they can manage it in Bogotá, which is a very complicated megacity with a lot of issues, you could imagine London doing something similar,” she said, adding that much of the planning could be done remotely.
- 14 Transport engineer Brian Deegan says 20mph streets, bikes for key workers and “core corridor” emergency cycle routes would help more essential staff cycle, while removing guard rails on pavements and extending pedestrian space using traffic cones would help those on foot. The London Cycling Campaign has also come up with short-, medium- and long-term proposals to improve active travel in the capital during the crisis.

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### 4 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

- While the lockdown has led to the amount of traffic falling around the world, what negative effect has this fall had?
  - Air pollution from exhaust fumes harms the survival chances of people suffering from Covid-19.
  - There has been an increase in the number of drivers speeding, and this is dangerous for walkers and cyclists.
  - Less traffic on the streets has led to more people in parks.
- Which of these cities has introduced the largest network of bike lanes?
  - Philadelphia
  - Bogotá
  - Denver
- Why has London not introduced emergency bike routes?
  - because the junction improvements needed would mean construction workers having to travel during lockdown
  - because there is 63% less traffic, so it was not thought to be necessary at the moment
  - because access to all streets needs to be maintained for emergency vehicles and residents
- What, according to Dr Rachel Aldred, could the UK learn from other countries?
  - how to enforce the lockdown but keep streets open
  - how to treat cycling as a proper form of transport
  - how to carry out town planning remotely

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#### 5 Find the word

Find the following words in the text.

1. an adverb meaning *only for a limited period of time* (para 1)
2. a verb meaning *decide officially that something will be used for a different purpose* (para 1)
3. a verb meaning *exist in such large amounts that someone or something cannot deal with them* (para 4)
4. a verb meaning *match the qualities or features of something* (para 7)
5. a noun meaning *a container in which you grow plants* (para 10)
6. an adjective meaning *more than is usual or necessary* (para 11)
7. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *do something in a way that is not skilful or effective* (para 13)
8. a plural noun meaning *problems* (para 13)

#### 6 Verb + noun collocations

Match the verbs in the left-hand column with the nouns or noun phrases in the right-hand column.

- |              |                              |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| 1. keep      | a. the spread of a disease   |
| 2. prevent   | b. access                    |
| 3. implement | c. temporary cycle lanes     |
| 4. relieve   | d. things (or people) moving |
| 5. maintain  | e. congestion                |
| 6. install   | f. actions                   |

#### 7 Word-building

Fill the gaps using the correct form of the word in brackets at the end of each sentence.

1. It is vital that people remain healthy and active while \_\_\_\_\_ distancing. [SOCIAL]
2. Air pollution \_\_\_\_\_ harms the survival chances of people with Covid-19. [SIGNIFY]
3. In Bogotá, workers adjust the width of cycle lanes depending on \_\_\_\_\_. [USE]
4. There has been a suggestion that road junctions could be \_\_\_\_\_ while roads are quieter. [DESIGN]
5. Dr Aldred has complained about the lack of \_\_\_\_\_ from the government. [GUIDE]
6. Hackney Council in east London is planning to \_\_\_\_\_ filter its streets using bollards and planters. [TEMPORARY]

#### 8 Discussion

Discuss the statements.

- All city centres should be traffic-free.
- Air pollution is a bigger danger to public health than Covid-19.
- Every cloud has a silver lining, and some good may come of this terrible situation.