Reimagining towns and cities post COVID-19

How can UK authorities seize the opportunity to transform travel and behaviours?

June 2020 v1.0

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Introduction

Purpose of this document

"When we do emerge, the world will seem quite different, at least for a while. The need to maintain social distancing means that our public transport system cannot go back to where it left off.

Here is a very stark fact...Even with public transport reverting to full service - once you take into account the 2 metre social distancing rule – there would only be effective capacity for one in ten passengers on many parts of the network.

Just a tenth of the old capacity.

So, getting Britain moving again, while not overcrowding our transport network, is going to require many of us to think carefully about how and when we travel."

Secretary of State for Transport,
9th May 2020

The gauntlet, for why transport and travel needs to change post lockdown, was laid down by the Transport Secretary on 9th May when he announced a "...£2 billion package to put cycling and walking at the heart of our transport policy."

The first £225 million made available forms the Emergency Active Travel Fund, to support local authorities across England to make rapid but lasting changes to their transport networks by prioritising cycling and walking.

But how exactly should local authorities respond? How can approaches and actions engender and reinforce positive behaviour change? How can communities and businesses be engaged so that initiatives are well understood and considered successful?

We have designed this document to help local authorities, consultants and any person or organisation interested in helping improve travel and transport better understand the dynamic and complex situation we are facing.

We look at travel and transport trends during the lockdown to establish what scenarios are likely to emerge during recovery. We take a deep dive into how government funding is structured and how local authorities can best respond to new Statutory Guidance issued by the Department for Transport. And we discuss what new tools and approaches are

available for authorities to consider when trying to move quickly and with clarity of purpose during such uncertain circumstances.

After the hardships and tragedies that the country has so unfortunately shared, our work on this topic has invigorated the AppyWay team to do even more to support our local authority partners seize the opportunities and deliver long-lasting positive change for their residents and businesses.

Let's dive in >

Impact of lockdown on travel and transport:

What new world is emerging?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on travel and transport. The week before official lockdown began in the UK, CityMapper showed travel on London's public transport services were already down 36% of its usual level. During the initial weeks of lockdown in March, the UK road network saw 71% less traffic compared to 2019, National Rail was down 95%, the London Underground 94% and London buses 80% (DfT). Private and public sector both felt - and are still feeling - the financial pain accompanying a huge drop in usership.

Suddenly, a new world emerged. City streets, now emptied of cars, filled with people walking and on bicycles for essential journeys and exercise alike. Long term government goals to nudge people towards active travel were seemingly realised overnight, helped by safer, quieter roads and by commuters looking for alternatives to public transport when returning to work. Bike shops have rarely been busier or seen more diverse customers.

What's more, air pollution in the UK halved on the first day of lockdown and according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, the UK has avoided 1,752 premature deaths linked to air pollution thanks to the cleaner air, the second biggest beneficiary in Europe.

Transport use by mode: 01 March – 15 June

Source: *Department for Transport*

Deaths in Europe reduced by 11,000 due to clean air

Estimated number of premature deaths avoided due to lower pollutant exposure*
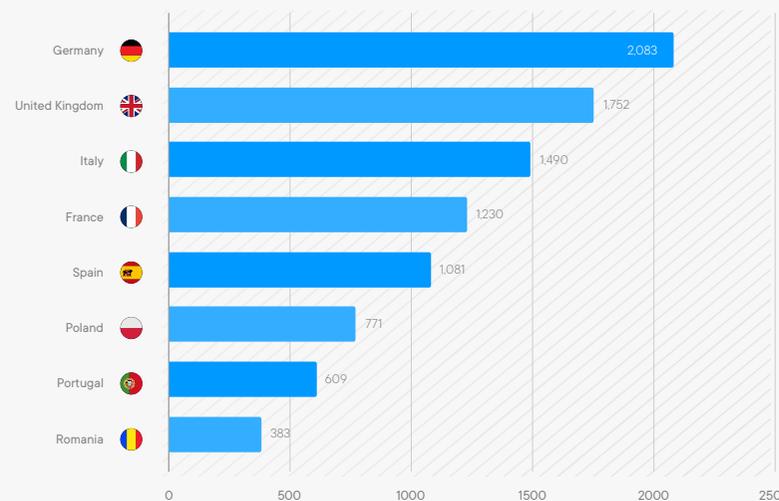
Source: *Centre for Reseach on Energy and Clean Air*

*Top eight countries for averted deaths illustrated over a 30 day period (as of 30 APR 2020)

Meanwhile, various delivery companies report that demand now matches that of the Christmas period every day as shops remain closed and the public opt for online deliveries, increasing the demand for kerbside drop-offs.

What's next?

As the lockdown eases, national, devolved and local governments are grappling with the challenge of managing the safe return of increased travel. According to DfT figures, as of June 15th car usage is back to 70% of pre-lockdown levels, but public transport languishes behind: National Rail is only at 8% and bus use outside of London is 21%. Authorities are trying to strike a balance; with public transit being undesirable for many and discouraged for the near future, how can we maintain the environmental benefits seen during the lockdown, and how do we mitigate the return to, and even a rise in, private car journeys? In China there was a post-lockdown rise in individual car use, and interest in buying a car has risen in the UK. However - a silver lining - as more are considering buying an EV.

The answer from the UK and devolved governments thus far has been to fast track plans to increase active travel through an emergency active travel fund and emergency legislation to temporarily speed up changes to Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs or TMOs). These measures complement existing schemes such as Future Transport Zones, EV charging infrastructure funding, and incentives to buy EVs. The government has also fast tracked e-scooter trials.

The funding includes £225 million released by the DfT to local authorities in England to temporarily widen pavements and cycle paths to enable social distancing, while Transport for Scotland allocated £10 million for the same. Applications are being accepted for a total of £2bn in funding for active travel from the DfT, with initial London borough winners already announced.
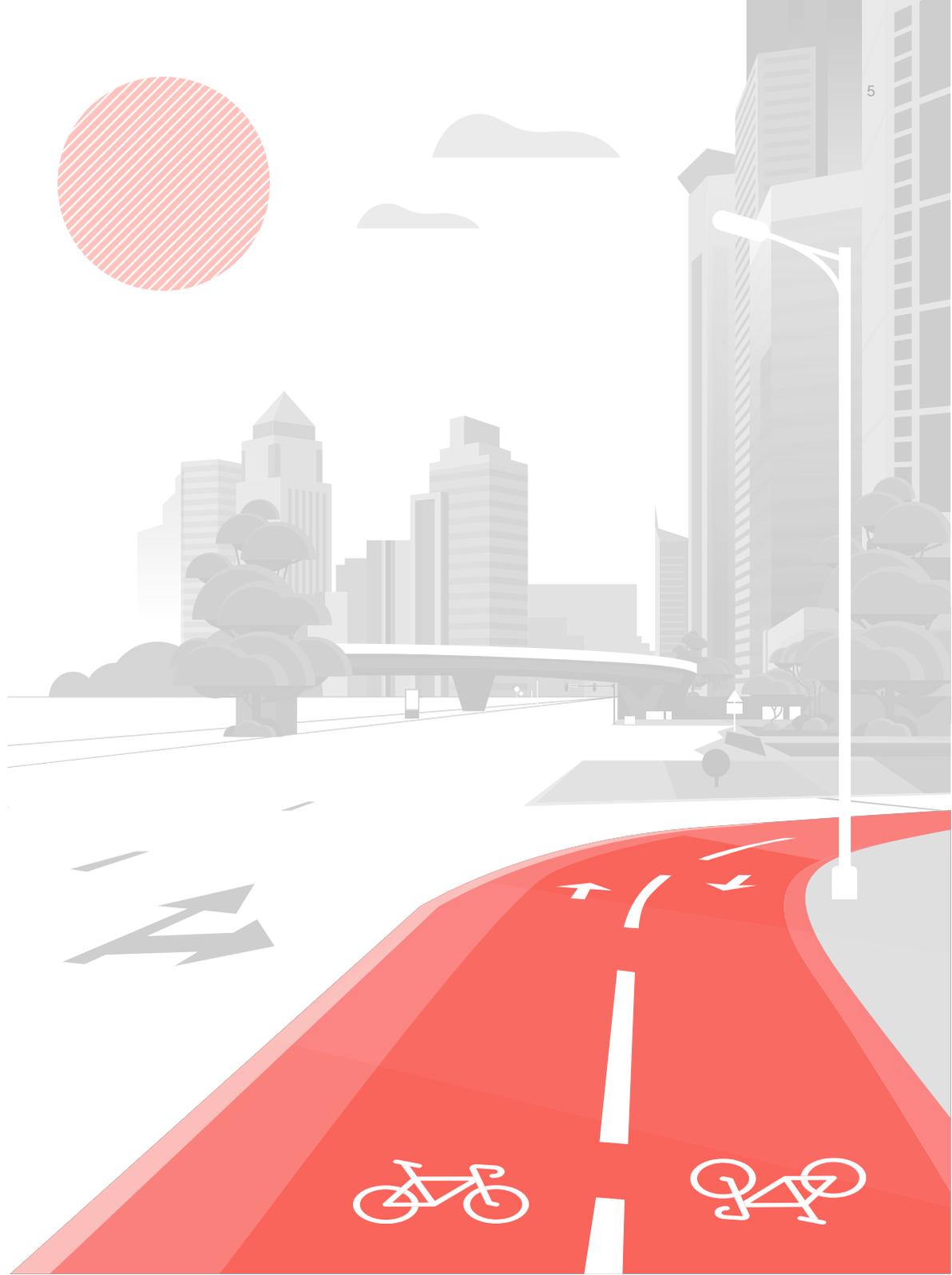
In London, a recent survey by Centre for London shows that the vast majority of London adults support temporary widening of pavements and new or wider cycle lanes, with 56% in favour of making these permanent (right). TfL is planning one of the world's largest car-free zones in its Streetspace scheme, while similar changes are being made in cities worldwide, including Paris.

Local authorities around the country have a huge opportunity to transform their streets. However, as each authority has different population sizes, transport needs, and topography, not to mention team sizes and planning capacity, it also poses some challenges in bidding for and actioning changes. Rural and urban councils will have very different needs, for example. Furthermore, new cycle paths will need to be balanced with access for increased deliveries, and planned to complement public transport when we return back to "normal".

Vision and recommendations are great, but how will authorities action these in the real world, with real world challenges?

At AppyWay, we welcome the movement to transform streets and the kerb and offer the tools and expertise to help local authorities to plan and implement these changes.
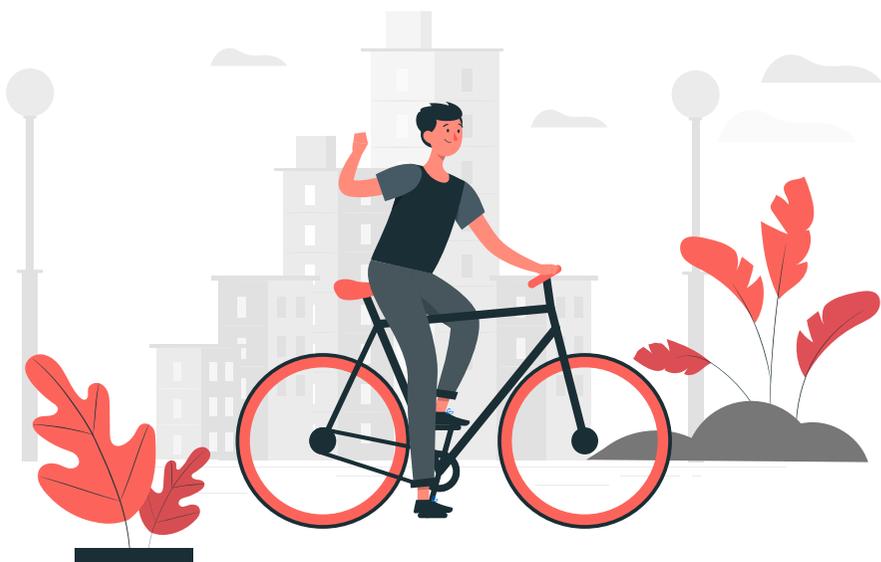
To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose each of the following policies being introduced in London?

- ● Compulsory use of facemasks on public transport
- ● Temporary widening of pavements to aid social distancing
- ● Temporary provision of new cycle lanes, or wider existing cycle lanes, to aid social distancing
- ● Temporary closure of roads and parking to accommodate walking, cycling and space for queues
- ● Suspension of parking bays for temporary pavements or bike lanes
- ● Permanent provision of new cycle lanes, or wider existing cycle lanes
- ● Permanent widening of pavements
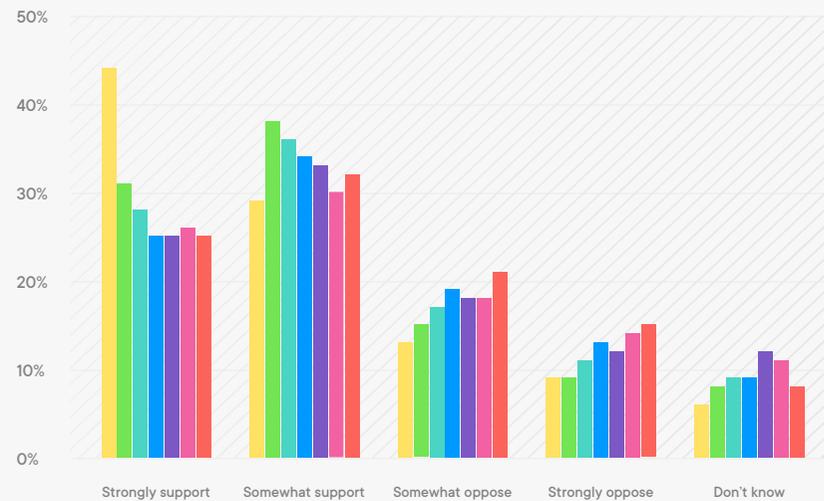
Source: *Savanta Comres and Centre for London*

Investing in positive outcomes

How to navigate the funding available from the DfT

In May, the government announced the Emergency Active Travel Fund, instructing local authorities across the country to swiftly develop schemes that encourage active travel and a green recovery from COVID-19. The works will be temporary with a vision that they could become permanent. The budgets will be small, for now, in the hopes that active travel budgets will increase in line with demand. Clearly there is a shared desire that once these schemes are in, it will be difficult, politically speaking, to remove them if they're judged a success.

We grabbed the magnifying glass to explore in detail, how much has been made available, how and when to apply, and what the DfT are looking for.

What's available?

When announcing £225m of funding for temporary walking and cycling schemes the Department for Transport message was explicit:

"The government…expects local authorities to make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians. Such changes will help embed altered behaviours and demonstrate the positive effects of active travel."

The fund will be administered in two phases:

Name	Allocation phase 1	Alloocation phase 2	Allocation total
England (outside of London)	40 million	160 million	200 million
London	5 million	20 million	25 million

Source: Centre for London

Allocation phase 1 – 1st tranche

£45m (£5m for TfL)

Applications for the first tranche closed on 5th June and the funds have been allocated. The DfT are moving quickly to make funds available, enabling successful authorities to begin closing roads to through traffic, installing segregated cycle lanes, and widening pavements. Work needs to start within 4 weeks of receiving funds and is required to be completed no more than 8 weeks from their initiation. It's been stated that if authorities are unable to meet these timeframes, the DfT can claw funding back and prevent any further funding from tranche 2.

In London, the DfT indicatively allocated a sum of **£100,000 to each individual borough** with another pot of **£1.7m going to Transport for London**. It seems the approach is designed to support rapid action in the capital. Whilst £100k is unlikely to cover significant schemes, it has been successful in getting emergency interventions enacted quickly.

Allocation phase 2 - 2nd tranche

£180m

The second tranche, representing 80% of the total fund, will be released in Summer 2020 and applications will soon be invited. This will enable authorities to install further, more permanent cycling and walking infrastructure within their communities, and transform any temporary schemes from the first tranche into permanent initiatives.

The fund has outlined its intention to give priority to low traffic neighbourhoods and cycle tracks. According to the DfT, the quickest and cheapest way of achieving this will be by using point closures. Whilst 20mph neighbourhoods are helpful, they will not be sufficient enough on their own to access phase two funding.

Accessing funding

In order to access funding via the Emergency Active Travel Fund, the DfT requires the completion of an online proforma. This will allow them to assess a local authority's plans on how they intend to spend the money.

With applications for tranche 1 closing back on Friday 5 June, as of timing of writing, instructions on how to access the second tranche of funding, together with a new proforma, are still pending.

Indicative allocations for local and combined authorities can be found here.

All eyes on summer 2020

The government have stated a cycling and walking investment strategy will be launched later this year, with further measures to transform active travel, and to deliver on the government's aim of doubling cycling and increasing walking by 2025. This will include the creation of a National Walking & Cycling Commissioner and Inspectorate; creating higher standards for permanent infrastructure across England, encouraging GPs to prescribe cycling and exercise, creating a long-term budget for cycling and walking, and treating budgets in a similar way to roads and highways budgets.

Also due is the long-awaited LTN 2/08 update of the government's design guide for cycling, a long-term funding stream for active travel and at least one zero emissions city centre.

According to the London Cycling Campaign, an 11,500-strong membership charity empowering cyclists around Greater London, 'These are perhaps the most promising of all of the government's announcements, but are yet to actually arrive'. For more insight on addressing the government's key cycling objectives, check out the charity's helpful overview of the Rapid Cycleway Prioritisation Tool that was commissioned by Sustrans and the Department for Transport.
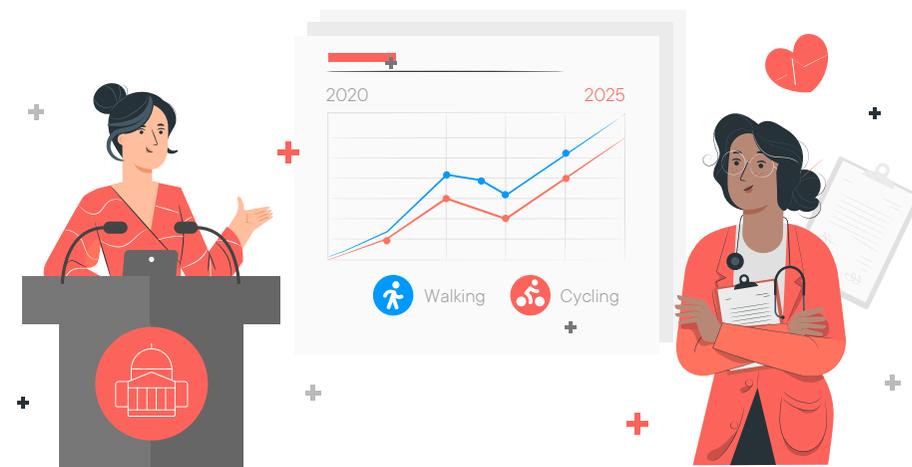
Analysing government guidance

Distinguishing between what the government says and what it means can sometimes be a tricky business. Helpfully, we are able to turn to an article written by Robert Huxford, director of the <u>Urban Design Group</u>, to explore how local authorties can best respond.

We recognise this moment for what it is: a once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformative change in how we make short journeys in our towns and cities." This is Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps' message in the foreword to the statutory guidance on network management in response to COVID-19. He then goes on to mention the benefits of active travel, including health, reduced air pollution and carbon emissions and local economic benefit. To anyone who has campaigned for these sorts of measures, this can only be seen as welcome backing. But the challenge now is to equip and support the local highway and traffic authorities in delivering things on the ground.

In law, statutory guidance is a type of guidance that councils must follow unless they have a very good reason not to. It is not something that can be noted and then ignored. A council may deviate from statutory guidance where it judges on admissible grounds that there is good reason to do so, but they do not have the freedom to take a substantially different course.

The Statutory Guidance is issued under Section 18 of the Traffic Management Act, and relates to the discharge of the Section 16 Network Management Duty. Implicit in this duty is a whole-network approach, and not piece- meal measures. The Statutory Guidance specifically calls for "whole-route" approaches to create corridors for buses, cycles and access only on key routes into town and city centres.

The measures listed under the Statutory Guidance are all the things that one would expect, such as installing 'pop-up' cycle facilities, widening footways, pedestrian crossings and refuges, encouraging walking and cycling to school using 'school streets', widening existing cycle lanes to maintain social distancing and reducing speed limits. The Statutory Guidance "expects local authorities to make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians", and states that "measures should be taken as swiftly as possible, and in any event within weeks, given the urgent need to change travel habits before the restart takes full effect". That is weeks, not months.

There is also a raft of existing statutory duties that impel action: duties under the Highways Act 1980, Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Road Traffic Act 1988, as well as the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. The Statutory Guidance was issued on 9 May: "weeks" becomes months on 9 July. Highway and traffic authorities that have not taken measures by then will be in breach of the Statutory Guidance.

But the big question is whether local authorities have the resources to respond in time with the extensive network approach required. The annual funding for local councils in England is nearly £12 billion less than it was a decade ago. Spending on highways and transport services (including public transport subsidies) is down by 42 percent over that period, from around £146 per head in 2009-10 to £86 per head in 2019-20, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

The reality is that light, cheap and quick solutions within a coherent network plan will be required if local councils are to secure the street space required necessary to "change travel habits before the restart takes full effect".

Progressive councils are introducing the measures under their own considerable statutory powers, making experimental traffic orders where necessary. Many are able in theory to accelerate the plans that they were working on prior to the pandemic, but these may be in a minority. Councils need as much help as possible. Rather than each trying to find its own way, it would make sense if there were detailed guidance on what to do and where.

The layout of most urban areas falls into three basic types: radial, grid and linear, and it should be possible to produce guidance for standard situations based on the intended function of each street and its physical dimensions. Ever since the 18th century there has been a standard range of footway, carriageway and highway widths. Councils already have street classification systems, not only the network classification that drivers recognise, but also systems for prioritising highways maintenance, winter maintenance, and even litter collection which classifies streets as high, medium and low intensity of use, and of course there is TfL's nine street type system. There is no need to start with a blank sheet.

Source: london-se1.co.uk

If the "within weeks" requirement of the Statutory Guidance is to be met, then local government needs detailed guidance within days. A coalition of expert practitioners, professional institutions and interest groups, along with central and local government, could be the answer, and to this end, I've helped pull together a group of such people to write to the Secretary of State, inviting him to support just such an approach.

After the crisis, it is to the long-term that we must turn our thoughts. Most councils have declared climate emergencies. The Statutory Guidance provides the authority to turn these words into deeds. Temporary measures can make way for permanent improvements, but without a change in travel habits brought about in the next few weeks, the once in a generation opportunity will have been lost. We must act, and we can.

Robert Huxford is director of the Urban Design Group. Along with other professional bodies, Robert is working to create a coalition of expertise and the guidance that is needed to address the government's new requirements.

*This article originally featured in **Local Transport Today***

Source: *london-se1.co.uk*

Left: Extra space for pedestrians on both the east and west sides of Borough High Street (Space for London)

Right: Half a carriageway being given over to pedestrians (Space for London)

Moving fast to deliver change

How can we help?

Mapper is the new benchmark in traffic order solutions. It's a completely digital, cloud based solution that enables teams to collaborate and solve their most pressing traffic order challenges.

Our award-winning software was built in collaboration with some of the country's most innovative local authorities, each with different challenges, and different in size and population. Today, as we move into a post COVID era, working at speed internally and with the public to address mobility challenges is a government mandate. With an increase in cars on the road, carbon emissions and a drastic reduction in public transport usage, local authorities need to take swift action. Add to that increasing infrastructure demands from ride-hailing and delivery services, authorities are now facing a challenge like never before.

That's where Mapper steps in. Our focus is on helping local authorities move fast and deliver change. Limitations from text based orders and legacy softwares hold them back. To enable a green recovery from COVID-19, cities and local authorities have to unlock the kerb and the first step to that is to digitise their kerbside. That's what we do, empower authorities to embrace the future of mobility by creating a kerbside that is dynamic and evolving to the needs of local residents.
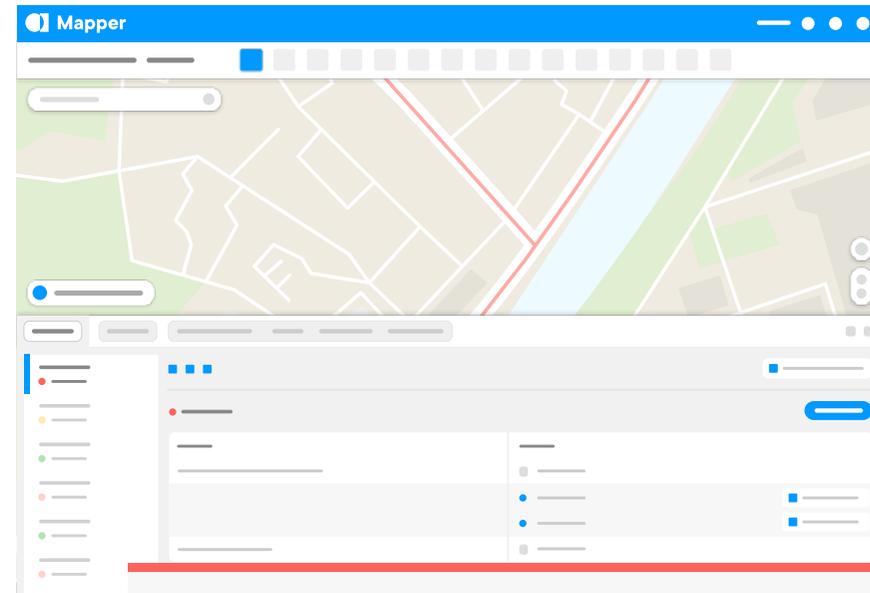
What they're saying

We have identified real savings in the time it takes to upload and edit data in our zone-based parking appraoch. Work which used to take several weeks is now done in a few hours. This will allow us to be more flexible in the future and support our mobility projects.

Sunil Budhdeo
Transport Innovation Manager
Coventry City Council

Coventry City Council

Digitise

Mapper's intuitive features make designing schemes easier. The solution digitally manages traffic orders and allows you to provide open access to your standardised kerbside data via an API. A simplified process with a modern user experience has enabled local authorities to significantly reduce the time and cost usually associated with creating and editing traffic orders. Mapper gives an overview of all traffic orders with a full history of changes. Bulk editing allows for changes to multiple bays and lines immediately.

Engage

Proposed schemes can be shared with the public at the click of button through our public consultation portal. A purpose-built form allows for feedback to be gathered, automatically categorised and reported, providing rich insight into public sentiment. All of this in real-time, streamlining your decision-making process and improving engagement with local residents. Once your schemes have been implemented, they will be available for the public to view as part of your live authority-wide map of on-street restrictions.

Collaborate

Mapper creates visibility across departments enabling them to work from a single source of truth and make informed decisions. Multiple teams can see all schemes being drafted, under consultation and scheduled to be made. Our data validation process ensures all orders are unique to avoid contradictory proposals. The end result is an accurate, up-to-date map of all active on-street restrictions, ready to be used by all.

Propose orders to public consultation, in one click
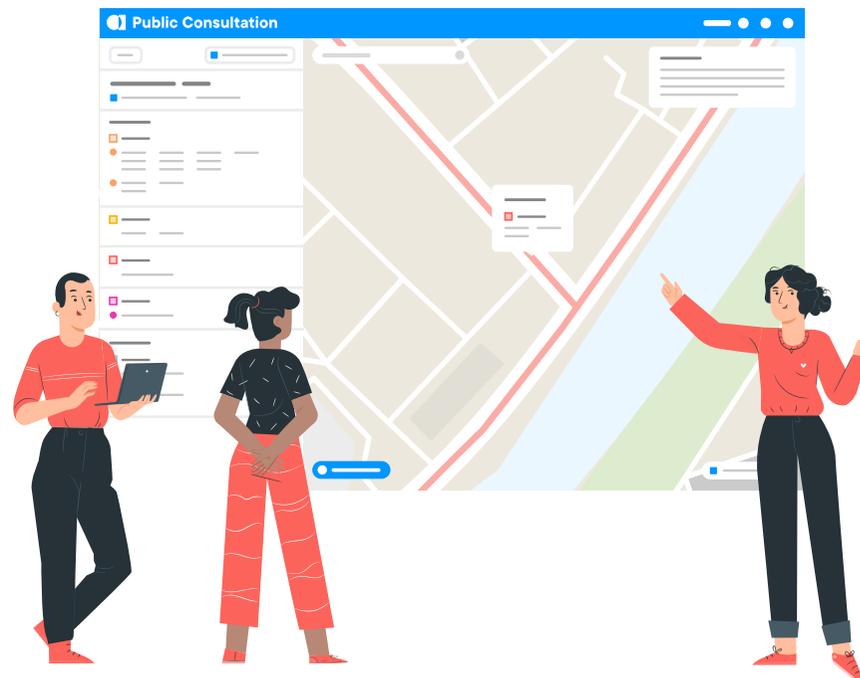
Cross team collaboration to create one source of truth

Features designed to deliver value quickly

Want to see it working? Request a demo

Faster traffic orders

Smart tools, editors, filters, menus and bulk editing; local authorities have full power on hand to transform and digitise traffic orders.

Instant public consultation

Win the trust of the public by creating transparency in the consultation process and establishing a smarter web based feedback loop.

Mapper
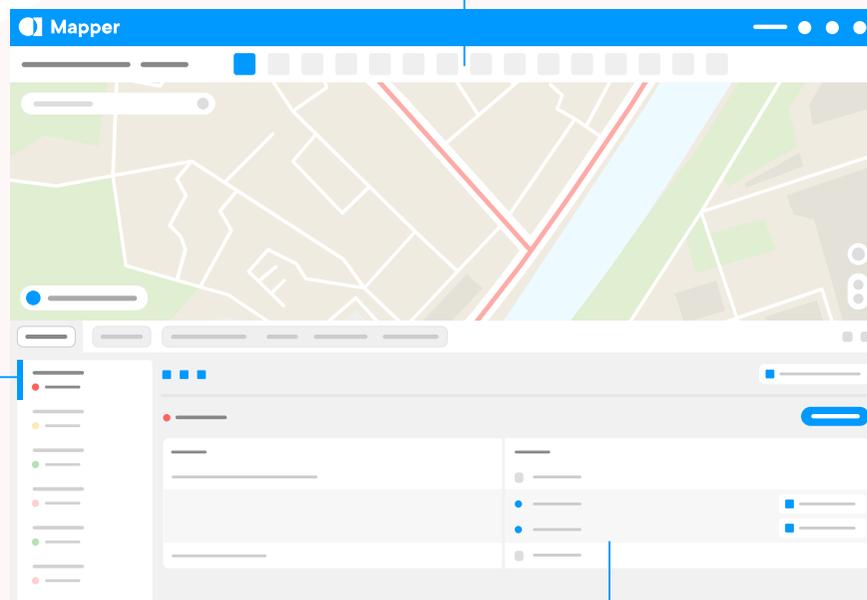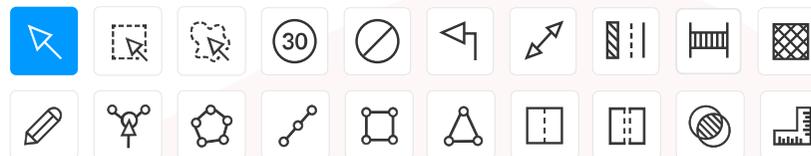
Cycle Route
● Editing Draft

Pedestrian Zone
● Proposed

Reduced Speed Limit
● Made

● Edit draft
● Propose
● Publish

Change order status ⌄

Team wide collaboration

Whether you're remote or in the office, Mapper enables local authorities to do their best work together in teams from a single source of truth across all schemes.

Additions	Features
Operating Hours 1, Exemption 4	2 Pedestrian Zone

About the authors

Minesh Naran
Head of City Partnerships

Minesh leads on engagement with councils and highway authorities across the UK. His experience spans implementation of IT and Geospatial solutions from initial enquiry and procurement, through to system deployment and post-live support. He is well-versed in on-boarding services including data surveys, validation and compliance with legal procedures regarding traffic orders and highway asset management.

Get in contact today:

M: +44 (0) 7852 641 180
E: minesh@appyway.com

Annie Reddaway
Mobility Analyst

Annie is a Mobility Analyst at AppyWay, providing rich insight into how the public and private sectors can collaborate to optimise transport infrastructure in our cities.

Annie has been a part of the connected vehicle and mobility industry for 6 years, working directly with companies including GM, Ford, Volvo, car2go, Continental, BMW, Otonomo, WirelessCar, and the City of Detroit.

In 2018, Annie was honoured to be awarded "Best Connected Car/New Mobility Leader Spokesperson" by Auto Connected Car News and recently co-founded the London hub of the Women in Mobility network.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a seismic impact on our country. Its shockwaves have shaken every aspect of our lives and livelihoods. The speed and depth at which it hit will never be forgotten and as we emerge into a new reality. Interestingly, it's the 'speed' at which we return, react and recover that is front of mind.

Opinions are mixed on whether it's right that we try to return to normality quickly. Issues of public safety and economic stimulation are hard to reconcile for many. However, as our guide has hopefully illustrated, when considering the impact the pandemic has had on travel and our behaviours, the opportunities now available to us to make lasting, positive change in our towns and cities are incredibly positive.

It is right to encourage local authorities to move quickly, and government guidance can certainly be commended for its ambition. But it's clear speed of action must come with clarity of purpose and an ability to bring residents, businesses and communities along on the journey towards a cleaner, safer and more sustainable future.

Whilst the short-term challenge of maintaining social-distancing across our public transport network presents a compelling catalyst to enact change, the broader, more long-lasting opportunity comes from the behaviour and modal changes exhibited during lockdown.

From our perspective, as a partner and collaborator with a wide range of local authorities, we can see there is a tension between the ambition of such rapid and transformative change and the existing capacity and mechanisms available to make it happen.

Look at Leicester City Council's Transport Recovery Plan, the first to be awarded their allocation under the Emergency Active Travel Fund (£363,000).

Leicester City Council

Yet, things are happening at a pace not easily remembered. New tools are available that make it easier and quicker to deliver initiatives. People are embracing active travel at an unprecedented rate and many businesses are reassessing how they evaluate productivity with remote workforces.

Challenges vastly vary between dense cityscapes and rural communities, but the opportunities remain consistent. We are living through a transformative period in the history of travel and transport in this country and we at AppyWay are excited and energised, to support our local authority partners and help them seize these opportunities to their fullest potential. This is what we're all about, after all - thriving cities, from the kerb up.

We're ready to help >

appyway

appyway.com

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Thank You