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scotland

ACTIVE RECOVERY

LOCKING-IN THE
ACTIVE TRAVEL BENEFITS

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FOREWORD



Councillor
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Towns and cities changed beyond all recognition during lockdown. As governments have sought to keep people safe, the widespread restrictions on travel and transport brought urban spaces to a standstill. With shops, restaurants and bars closed, once-vibrant streets across the country lay empty. The impact of the Corona Crisis will be felt in our communities and economy for many months, and perhaps years, as efforts are made to restore some sense of 'normality' to people's lives. But whilst this crisis has caused huge disruption to normal life, it has also presented an opportunity for people to stop and question whether the old way of doing things was really working.

Nowhere is this more evident than in our streets. For many people, our towns and cities have been shown in a new light since travel restrictions came into place. With traffic greatly reduced during lockdown, people have been able to experience clean air, safe streets, and quiet and enjoyable urban spaces. Public transport has of course been severely impacted, limiting the accessibility of towns and cities for many, and in particular for those households with no access to a car. But at the same time, walking and cycling have become easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities. For many, this has given a taste of a future where getting around on foot or by bike is an option for those who did not consider this possible before, and where people have priority in urban spaces, not cars.

This report explores what Scottish towns and cities can learn from the lockdown experience at home and abroad to create safer, attractive urban spaces which put people first to make walking and cycling the norms for everyday journeys.



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LESSONS FROM LOCKDOWN

Photo by Eduardo Enrietti on Unsplash

CURRENT SPACE ALLOCATION FOR WALKING IS UNFAIR AND UNSAFE

One of the biggest revelations during lockdown has been just how much space is given to vehicles in towns and cities. With streets usually dominated by vehicles lying empty, the imbalance of streetspace allocation has been laid bare. Prioritising public space for private vehicles is not just unfair and inefficient, it is also unsafe, with space for pedestrians in cities across the world shown to be incompatible with physical distancing rules.¹ Indeed, recent analysis of street space in Edinburgh and Glasgow has revealed a lack of safe space for physical distancing.² The same streets that feature pavements not wide enough to allow just two metres between pedestrians,³ typically provide a space many times greater for vehicles; this exposes where past priorities have lain. Not only is there often not enough space for walking, but the space that does exist frequently presents challenging or unwelcoming conditions. Street clutter such as guardrails or road signage create an unpleasant and inconvenient environment, restricting movement and forcing close interaction with other street users. This is a particular issue for people with certain disabilities, such as visually-impaired people or wheelchair users.

During lockdown, the lack of safe space for walking was quickly realised by local authorities, with many cities across the world rolling out temporary measures such as pavement widenings and street

closures to ensure that people could comply with physical distancing rules. Indeed, many Scottish towns and cities are now taking similar steps through the Scottish Government's *Spaces for People* fund, and the high level of interest expressed by local authorities in Scotland has led the Scottish Government to increase the fund from £10 million to £30 million. These measures are creating a safer urban environment, allowing people to walk around safe in the knowledge that physical distancing can be practiced. Whilst these temporary measures provide a solution to the immediate challenge of the Corona Crisis, it is clear that more permanent solutions are needed to design streets which create a safe, enjoyable and convenient environment for walking.

SAFETY MAKES CYCLING AN OPTION FOR EVERYONE

After an initial decline, large increases in cycling have been witnessed during lockdown, as people seek an easy way to get around for everyday journeys or simply just for exercise. To keep people safe when cycling, many cities – from Berlin to Bogotá to Budapest – have responded by creating low-cost emergency cycle lanes on key routes. In Scotland we've seen positive steps too, with many cities now taking measures to keep people safe when cycling. With safer streets and less traffic around in cities, many have reported a wider range of people getting on their bikes, with inexperienced cyclists feeling more comfortable cycling on quiet roads.

¹ International Transport Forum (2020). COVID-19 Transport Brief: Re-Spacing Our Cities for Resilience. Figure 3: Space Walk: sidewalk conformity to physical spacing requirements. Retrieved 21 May 2020 from <https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/respacing-cities-resilience-covid-19.pdf>

² Guardian (2020). Maps show UK pavements not wide enough for social distancing - in pictures. Retrieved 2 June 2020 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2020/jun/01/pavement-widths-and-social-distancing-esri-uk-maps>

³ Whilst the UK has set 2 metres as the suggestion for physical distancing, many other countries are suggesting 1.5 metres: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-52522460>

But under normal conditions, cycling is all too often reserved for those most experienced on a bike, who feel more confident being exposed to high volumes of fast-moving traffic. These conditions are not safe or enjoyable, particularly for those with less experience of cycling. Many reports have been made of speeding during lockdown,⁴ the consequence of less traffic being that some drivers have chosen to use the empty roads to speed. This presents a serious risk to cyclists, who have to interact directly with cars on roads, and creates an unpleasant and scary experience. If car traffic is set to rise as restrictions are eased, and temporary safe cycle lanes are taken away, cycling will once again become reserved for only those willing to accept higher levels of road danger.

CITIES CAN ACT FAST WHEN THEY NEED TO

The rate of change in cities to adapt transport to new conditions has been staggering. Almost overnight new measures, such as widened pavements or pop-up cycle lanes, sprung up in cities across the world as local authorities acted to keep people safe whilst moving. The immediate need to keep people safe was recognised, and action was taken. This has demonstrated not only that local authorities can be agile, responsive and show leadership in times of need, but also that creating space for walking and cycling does not always require large sums of money, complex design processes or a complete overhaul of the urban environment.

In this crisis, creating more space for active travel in lockdown has often been as simple as merely rolling out cones, low-cost barriers and signs to protect people from vehicles. These measures are being swiftly implemented under Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs). This is a far cry from the approach normally taken in creating walking and cycling infrastructure. As demonstrated in many cases, the current Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process means that implementing even modest proposals to give more space to walking and cycling can take many years and prove prohibitively expensive for cash-strapped local authorities. In the current crisis, and indeed the ongoing Climate Emergency, this complex, costly and time-consuming process is delaying vital action. There is no reason why *in theory* further action to make walking and cycling easier for everyone cannot be done quickly and easily, but the current technical and legal requirements imposed on local authorities make fast action impossible.

⁴ BBC News (2020). Coronavirus: Speeding drivers flout limit during lockdown. Retrieved 29 May 2020 from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52370352>



2

LOCKING IN THE BENEFITS

Photo by Ryan Johnston on Unsplash

LOCKING IN THE BENEFITS

At home and abroad, cities' action to keep people safe when walking and cycling during the Corona Crisis has been hugely encouraging. Urban spaces have been adapted to prioritise people and ensure everyone can get around on foot or bike at a safe physical distance. But this opportunity cannot go to waste. With public transport capacity set to be severely restricted in the coming months, it is vital that this chance is taken to make walking and cycling the norm for everyday journeys post-lockdown. To capitalise on the safer urban environment created during lockdown, action is needed to lock in these changes for the future. This is the time to act to change our towns and cities for the better.

Re-allocating street space for walking and cycling should be the top priority for all towns and cities now, and in the coming months. This is vital not only to keep people safe and active during the health crisis, but also to avoid an unwanted shift to increased car use in the coming months. Public transport will remain the main form of transport for many – *and should continue to be supported alongside active travel* – but with its capacity constrained in at least the short-term, walking and cycling will need to become key modes of travel post-lockdown to avoid yet more congestion, pollution and road danger in our towns and cities. The experience from many cities across the world both in the lockdown and post-lockdown phases has shown that reallocating space for walking and cycling not only makes sense in terms of efficiency and safety, but that it is also essential to keep things moving as lockdown measures are eased. Furthermore, with businesses having endured serious financial challenges during lockdown, action is needed to ensure that people return to town and city centres with the confidence that there is ample and safe space to walk, sit, shop and relax.

WALKING: PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Perhaps the biggest lesson from lockdown is that there is simply not enough space for pedestrians in towns and cities. Giving more space for people on foot is not only vital for safe physical distancing in the coming months, but also for creating more enjoyable, relaxing spaces in towns and cities.

Scottish towns and cities should commence a comprehensive and targeted street space reallocation programme to widen pavements, focusing efforts in strategic areas with high footfalls and where space is most restricted. Many of these locations are already being temporarily widened during lockdown. Action should be taken to now make these temporary measures permanent. Focus should also be given to increasing space around key pedestrian 'pinch points', such as at bus stops and railway stations. This should also be accompanied by measures to ensure a more efficient flow of people on foot, such as priority measures at pedestrian crossings and reduced street clutter.

The implementation of these measures should reflect one of the key messages of the lockdown: to 'stay local'. The improvements to streetspace should not be restricted to the centres of large cities but should also be implemented in local town centres and neighbourhoods, making it easier, safer and more attractive for people to walk directly from their front door.



CASE STUDY: LONDON⁵

- The Mayor's Streetspace Plan will see temporary pedestrian measures made permanent, pavements widened and select streets closed to traffic.
- Focus will be placed on 'low-traffic neighbourhoods' to prioritise local journeys on foot and bike.
- Space reallocation being prioritised around select public transport stations and interchanges to reduce crowding and close contact.

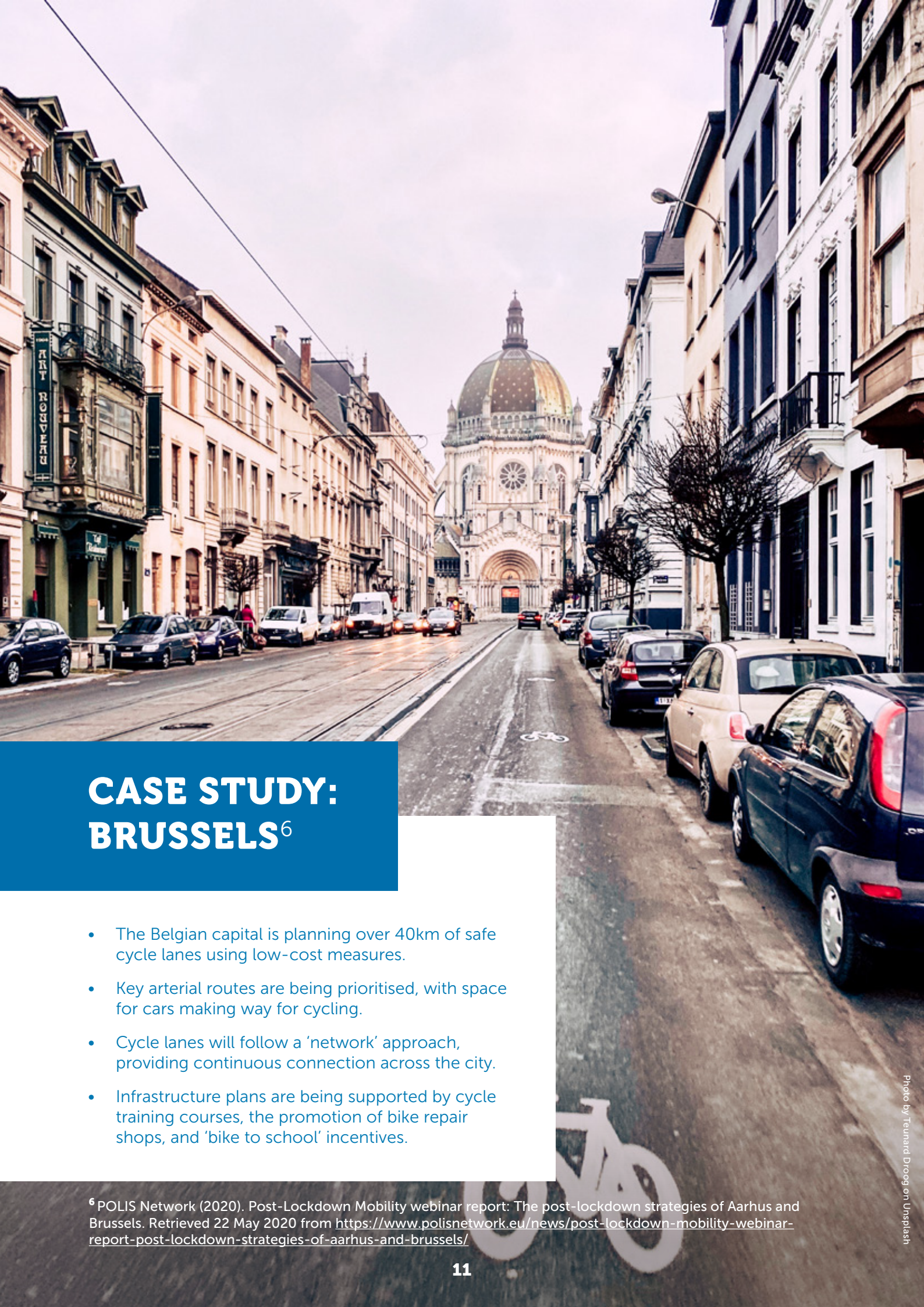
⁵ POLIS Network (2020). Post-Lockdown Mobility report: Reallocation of road space to promote active travel. Retrieved 22 May 2020 from <https://www.polisnetwork.eu/news/post-lockdown-mobility-report-reallocation-of-road-space-to-promote-active-travel/>

CYCLING: SAFER ROUTES FOR EVERYONE

To make cycling an option for everyone post-lockdown, creating safe space is paramount. Giving people the reassurance that they will not have to frequently interact with vehicles when travelling by bike will be vital in ensuring that people of all ages and abilities have the confidence to cycle for everyday journeys. With public transport limited, cycling will have to become a key mode of travel for short-to medium-distance journeys in the months and years ahead.

To enable this, several actions will be needed. Scottish towns and cities should roll out safe, segregated cycle lanes on key routes to protect people from vehicles and make cycling an option for everyone. Temporary cycle lanes created during lockdown should be made permanent where possible, accompanied by the creation of additional lanes where these are needed most. A strategic approach should be taken to create a comprehensive network of cycle lanes to give people the confidence to travel by bike right across a city with the reassurance that continuous, safe routes will be provided.

To open cycling up to a wider range of people, public bike hire schemes should be expanded, increasing both the number of bikes available and the geographical extent of the network. For those cities where no public hire scheme exists, steps should be taken to create a public hire scheme in the near future.



CASE STUDY: BRUSSELS⁶

- The Belgian capital is planning over 40km of safe cycle lanes using low-cost measures.
- Key arterial routes are being prioritised, with space for cars making way for cycling.
- Cycle lanes will follow a 'network' approach, providing continuous connection across the city.
- Infrastructure plans are being supported by cycle training courses, the promotion of bike repair shops, and 'bike to school' incentives.

⁶ POLIS Network (2020). Post-Lockdown Mobility webinar report: The post-lockdown strategies of Aarhus and Brussels. Retrieved 22 May 2020 from <https://www.polisnetwork.eu/news/post-lockdown-mobility-webinar-report-post-lockdown-strategies-of-aarhus-and-brussels/>

SAFER STREETS: RECLAIMING STREETS FOR PEOPLE

As many countries move into the post-lockdown phase, many cities are cutting speed limits to ensure that walking and cycling remains a safe and convenient option for a wide range of people.

Lower vehicle speeds are an important factor in creating a relaxing and enjoyable environment where people feel able to, and want to, spend time. Many Scottish cities have already opted for 20mph zones, which is a positive step to shift the balance in favour of people on foot. However, 20mph speed limits now need to become the default option in urban areas to keep people safe during and after the Corona Crisis.

This should be accompanied with street design measures to slow down private vehicle speeds, as well as strict enforcement of speeding and other offences endangering people on foot and bike such as pavement parking.

A photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a tan trench coat, a dark beret, and black boots, walking away from the camera across a zebra crossing. She is carrying a large orange tote bag. In the background, another person in a dark coat is walking, and a car with its headlights on is visible on the street. The scene is set in an urban environment with buildings and a sidewalk.

CASE STUDY: BRUSSELS⁹

- A 'slow streets' project will cut vehicle speeds to 20km/h inside the inner ring-road.
- A default city-wide 30km/h speed limit will come into force in 2021.
- Selected roads will remain at 50km/h or 70km/h limits.

⁹ POLIS Network (2020). Post-Lockdown Mobility webinar report: The post-lockdown strategies of Aarhus and Brussels. Retrieved 22 May 2020 from <https://www.polisnetwork.eu/news/post-lockdown-mobility-webinar-report-post-lockdown-strategies-of-aarhus-and-brussels/>

IMPLEMENTATION: TEST, TRIAL, DELIVER


The rate at which measures were implemented during lockdown to keep people safe should set a precedent for the future. Lockdown has shown that when there is an urgent need to prioritise movement on foot and bike, action can be taken quickly to make temporary changes. But the process for making longer-term changes to rebalance street space is simply too slow and complex to meet the needs of the crisis with which we are faced.

Whilst ambitious plans now exist in some Scottish cities to prioritise people over vehicles, we need to see the pace of action stepped-up. Existing plans should be fast-tracked in light of the situation presented by this crisis, with measures rolled out over the coming months, rather than in years and decades.

To enable this, the Scottish Government should reform the TRO process to allow local authorities to progress active travel improvements in a faster, cheaper and more straightforward manner. While the current TRO process is still in place local authorities should plan ahead to implement permanent changes as soon as possible. The increased lifespan of the temporary measures, enabled by a recent change in law, that will allow the measures to stay in place for eighteen instead of six months,⁷ provides an opportunity for local authorities to progress work on making the interventions permanent, while they are still in place.

The post-lockdown period should be used to test and trial these measures, gauging the impact and success of measures to rebalance street space in favour of walking and cycling. This not only provides vital space for walking and cycling as a means of getting around whilst public transport is limited, but also offers an opportunity to showcase the benefits of putting people first in urban spaces, helping to address concerns or preconceptions about such schemes.

⁷ Scottish Parliament (2020). Coronavirus (Scotland) (No. 2) Bill, section 10. Retrieved 05 June 2020 from <https://beta.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/coronavirus-scotland-no2-bill/stage-3/coronavirus-scotland-no2-bill-as-passed.pdf>

A man with a beard and a hat is riding a black bicycle on a Paris street. He is wearing a light blue blazer and dark trousers. In the background, there is a building with a sign that says 'saemes' and 'Le stationnement de la ville de Paris'. A white car is parked on the street to the right.

CASE STUDY: ILE-DE-FRANCE REGION⁸

- Bringing forward pre-existing plans for 650km of cycle paths across the capital region, 250km of which will be created in the coming months.
- Temporary lanes will be used to test the network and predict citizens' needs.
- Fast-tracking expansion of public e-bike scheme, providing over 10,000 rental e-bikes and financial subsidy for the purchase of e-bikes.

⁸ POLIS Network (2020). Post-Lockdown Mobility webinar report: The post-lockdown strategies of Rome and Ile-de-France. Retrieved 22 May 2020 from <https://www.polisnetwork.eu/news/post-lockdown-mobility-webinar-report-the-post-lockdown-strategies-of-rome-and-ile-de-france/>



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CONCLUSIONS

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TRANSFORMING URBAN SPACES

Across the world, scores of local authorities have taken action to transform urban spaces to keep people safe during the crisis. Almost overnight cities have set up measures to give more space for walking and cycling and re-balance urban space. What is striking is that the best examples are not coming from the usual suspects of Amsterdam and Copenhagen: they are instead coming from cities where cars have historically been allowed to dominate streets. This highlights that car-centric cities are not able to keep people moving safely; it also shows that cities that had already prioritised sustainable transport are more resilient, adaptable and safer. It is clear that to create safe and healthy cities, we need to put people first.

With restrictions to public transport due to continue in the coming months, urban transport faces serious challenges as lockdown measures are eased. Without action now, there is a real risk of car-dominated cities in the coming months and years. Indeed, as reported in our 'Just Recovery' report, car traffic is already returning in force as travel restrictions begin to ease. This is unwanted for a host of reasons, not least because this comes after a period where people have been used to being able to safely walk and cycle in urban areas. Returning to car-dominated streets now poses a real risk to people's health and wellbeing, as well as causing challenges for congestion, air pollution and climate change.

The Corona Crisis has created a hugely challenging situation for local authorities, and the immediate focus is rightly on ensuring that towns and cities recover in the coming months. However, returning to pre-lockdown conditions in urban transport – or worse yet seeing an increased dominance of unsustainable transport – is a situation that simply cannot be allowed to happen.

There is now a huge opportunity to learn the lessons from lockdown to rebuild towns and cities for the better. Putting people first in towns and cities will not only keep people safe in the recovery from the Corona Crisis, but will help to create healthy, efficient, resilient, attractive and sustainable urban spaces fit for the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES



WALKING

1. Commence a comprehensive and targeted **streetspace reallocation programme** to widen pavements. Priority should be given to key pedestrian 'pinch points' with high footfall, for example at bus stops, railway stations and pedestrian crossings. Where necessary, this should include reducing car parking and road space. Care should be taken to ensure that such measures do not adversely affect existing public transport priority measures.
2. Take action to ensure a more efficient flow of people, such as greater **pedestrian priority at crossings** and the removal of unnecessary street clutter.



CYCLING

3. Construct safe, **segregated cycle lanes** across towns and cities, focusing efforts on key routes such as commuter corridors. Care should be taken to create a continuous network of cycle paths, connecting segments of safe segregated infrastructure to give people the confidence to travel by bike right across towns and cities.
4. Expand **public bike hire** schemes, increasing both the number of bikes available and the geographical availability of bikes. For those cities and towns where no public hire scheme exists, action should be taken to create a public hire scheme in the near future.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES



SAFER STREETS

5. Implement **street design** measures to reduce private vehicle speeds in urban and residential areas.
 6. Strictly **enforce speeding** and other road traffic offences through close cooperation with relevant authorities (e.g. Police Scotland).
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IMPLEMEN- TATION

7. **Make permanent** the temporary improvements for walkers & cyclists implemented during lockdown.
8. **Fast-track existing strategies** to prioritise movement on foot and bike in urban spaces. Where no in-depth strategies exist, use this opportunity to develop strategies focusing on road space reallocation and the prioritisation of active travel in the short-, medium- and long-term.
9. Use the coming post-lockdown period to **test, trial and amend** road space reallocation measures.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT



SAFER STREETS

- 10.** Legislate to make **20mph speed limits** the default option in urban areas.
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IMPLEMEN- TATION

- 11. Reform the TRO process** to allow Local Authorities to progress active travel improvements in a faster, cheaper and more straightforward manner. The recent temporary legislative extension of the TTRO process to 18 months is welcome, but there is no reasonable excuse for further prevarication by Transport Scotland in reforming the TRO process to support Local Authority action.
- 12. Financially incentivise Local Authorities** to take action: the £30m currently directed to streetspace & active travel improvements, while welcome, represents only c. 1% of the Scottish Government's existing transport spending plans for 2020-21.

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Transform Scotland is the national alliance for sustainable transport, bringing together organisations from the private, public and voluntary sectors.

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