

Oxford ELLT Reading

Text 1: Traffic Solutions

On an overcast Saturday afternoon in December, a convoy of 30 cars, set off from the car park of an east-London Asda. The motorists, who formed a “festive motorcade”, wore Santa hats as they made their way slowly through the borough of Hackney before coming to a halt outside the town hall a couple of hours later

They had gathered to register their outrage at being the victims of a grand experiment that has been taking place on England’s roads since the start of the pandemic. As the national lockdown eased last summer, swathes of Hackney had been closed to through traffic. Locals found their usual routes were shut off with little warning. Danielle Ventura Presas, one of the protesters, told me that she now struggled to get her disabled cousin to day care while also dropping off her two children at school on time.

The road closures formed part of a wider scheme to tackle London’s growing congestion problems. Between 2009 and 2019, miles driven on its residential streets increased by 70%, in part due to the rise of Uber, online delivery services and GPS technology. Air pollution, meanwhile, plays a role in the premature deaths of nearly 10,000 Londoners each year. When the pandemic arrived, this trend was briefly interrupted: the roads fell quiet, and the novelty of car-free streets encouraged more people to go out on their bikes. In May 2020, the government tried to capitalise on the bike boom by announcing the biggest ever investment in “active travel” – walking, cycling or scooting.

The short-term aim of the fund was to make it easier for people to get around without using public transport. The broader vision – reducing reliance on the private car – was more radical.

In London, the Streetspace plan unveiled by mayor Sadiq Khan and Transport for London (TfL), demanded “an urgent and swift response” to the crisis. The strategy funnelled money from the government’s new active-travel fund to London’s boroughs for low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) and other projects to encourage walking and cycling, such as temporary cycle lanes and timed road closures outside schools.

LTNs block motor traffic from side streets with physical barriers such as planters or bollards, or with number plate recognition cameras at their boundaries which local authorities use to issue fines to drivers entering the zone. Residents inside LTNs can still drive to their home, but they may have to take a longer way round. The theory is that by reducing the amount of road space for cars, people will find other ways to make short journeys. (In London, almost half of car journeys are less than 2 miles.) That means more walking and cycling, which ultimately means less pollution, less congestion, quieter, safer streets and healthier citizens.

Critics of LTNs say closing side streets increases congestion elsewhere, but early monitoring of new LTNs in Hackney and Lambeth found that traffic on main roads hardly increased at all. Data from established LTNs in Walthamstow showed the opposite, although transport academic Rachel Aldred suggests that it is hard to draw conclusions about the specific impacts of these schemes as traffic in the area was rising more generally at the time.

After the UK’s first lockdown ended in July, the traffic soon returned and talk of the government’s promised “cycling revolution” faded, while some objectors continued to vandalise its remnants. In Hackney, the new street signs were spray painted, and someone cut the cables on an expensive new traffic enforcement camera.

The next few months will be decisive, as councils push for temporary schemes to become permanent, and objectors fight for the right to drive wherever they need to go. London's great traffic experiment hangs in the balance.

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Questions:

Question 1:

According to the text, what is the term 'set off' closest in meaning to?

Detonated.

Triggered something.

Created attention.

Began their journey.

Question 2:

According to the text, what is the term 'come to a halt' closest in meaning to?

Come to an agreement.

Stop moving.

Disrupt the flow of traffic.

Continuing the protest.

Question 3:

According to the text, what is the term 'outrage' closest in meaning to?

Shortage

Concern

Anger

Details

Question 4:

The closing of the roads is part of a larger plan to address which problem?

Road safety

Street maintenance

The rise of Uber

Congestion

Question 5:

According to the paragraph, what idea does Rachel Aldred put forward?

- A. Closing side streets increases traffic congestion in other areas
- B. D. It is difficult to speculate about the positive or negative effects of the LTNs.
- C. Traffic on main road increased due to the LTNs
- D. Traffic on main roads decreased due to LTNs

Question 6:

According to the paragraph, what happened on residential streets in the decade before 2020?

- A. The amount of traffic grew by over 50%
- B. Air pollution got worse.
- C. Many residential roads were closed.
- D. 10, 000 Londoners died

Question 7:

According to the paragraph, who claims that the LTNs cause more congestion on main roads?

- A. Residents of Hackney and Lambeth
- B. The Mayor of London
- C. Residents of Walthamstow
- D. Critics of the scheme

Question 8:

According to the paragraph, who is keen for the measures put in place during the pandemic to remain in place?

- A. London's Mayor
- B. Motorists in general.
- C. Councils
- D. Objectors for the fight to the right to drive

Questions 9 - 12:

Read the following questions below and choose whether they are TRUE or FALSE.

- 9) Sadiq Khan works for Transport for London (TfL).

10) Under the new scheme, residents inside the LTNs cannot drive to their homes.

11) In London, around 50% of car journeys are less than two miles.

12) LTNs in Hackney and Lambeth found that closing sidestreets increased traffic elsewhere.

Questions 13 - 15:

Read the paragraph and complete the sentences with the correct information.

Use NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS.

13) New street signs in Hackney were _____ .

14) The following months will be important, as councils begin pushing for _____ to become permanent.)

15) The _____ promised by the government eventually faded

Question 16:

According to the article, will LTNs definitely become permanent in the near future?

Yes

No

It is not clear.

Text 2: Cryptocurrency

The incoming mayor of New York City thinks cryptocurrency and blockchain technology are the future. Eric Adams has advocated to reshape the city into a crypto hotspot, with crypto being taught in schools. Adams said in an interview that bitcoin was the “new way of paying for goods and services throughout the entire globe” and that schools “must” teach the technology behind it, as well as “this new way of thinking”.

But not everyone is onboard with the crypto giddiness being expressed by America’s political class. Mining cryptocurrency is notoriously environmentally unfriendly, and in an era of rapid climate crisis, increasing the use of the technology could be hazardous.

According to Digiconomist, a single bitcoin transaction uses the same amount of power that the average American household consumes in a month – which equals roughly a million times more in carbon emissions than a single credit card transaction. And globally, the carbon footprint of bitcoin mining is greater than that of the United Arab Emirates and falls just below the Netherlands’. People should be concerned about the environmental and climate impacts of cryptocurrency mining such as bitcoin, said Benjamin A Jones, an economist at the University of New Mexico. Bitcoin mining uses energy predominantly generated from fossil fuels, which creates air pollution and carbon emissions, said Jones. “These pollution emissions are harmful to human health outcomes and the carbon emissions lead to climate damages,” he added.

Last month, a group of 70 climate, economic and racial justice groups wrote a letter to Congress urging leaders to address the climate implications of cryptocurrency. The letter cites the extreme levels of carbon emissions, energy consumption and electronic waste generated by cryptocurrency usage, production and mining.

“Cryptocurrency’s destructive impact on the environment is just another example of how corporations in a financialized economy will stop at nothing to create profits for investors, and how communities of colour will ultimately pay the price,” Erika Thi Patterson of the Action Centre on Race and the Economy wrote in the letter.

“Cryptocurrencies and their miners rely on harmful fuels like coal that produce toxic emissions linked to asthma, cancer, acid rain, and climate change. In doing so, cryptocurrency is exacerbating decades of environmental racism and fuelling climate chaos.”

Patrick Drupp, said: “It is beyond absurd that, as we speak and as the climate crisis only deepens, fossil fuel power plants are having their lives extended and even reopened in order to virtually ‘mine’ cryptocurrency. At a time when financial regulators ought to be doing everything possible to help tackle the climate crisis, it’s clear that the status quo of letting bitcoin and other cryptocurrency miners pollute our climate and communities at an exponential rate is unsustainable, unwise and in need of urgent action.”

Embracing cryptocurrencies means that America’s political leaders and policymakers must confront the environmental and climate damages generated through mining operations, says Jones. “For bitcoin in particular, one cannot embrace the coin without also acknowledging its impacts on the environment.”

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Questions:

1. The word giddiness in the paragraph is closest in meaning to

A: Flustered

B: Calm

C: Sensible

D: Serious

2. The word notoriously in the paragraph is closest in meaning to

A: Unknown

B: Well-known

C: Overt

D: Disputed

3. The word rapid in the paragraph is closest in meaning to

A: Leisurely

B: Sluggish

C: Quickly

D: Slack

4. The word rely in the paragraph is closest in meaning to

A: Believe in

B: Hope for

C: Look at

D: Lean on

5. According to the paragraph, what did Eric Adams consider about new payment types?

A: We are moving into a future without them

B: Understanding new payments should be part of the school syllabus

C: Blockchain technology is more largely used than cryptocurrency

D: New payment types will not be available around the globe

6. According to the paragraph, how did Digiconomist explain the amount of power each bitcoin transaction uses?

- A: Each transaction uses a similar amount of power to that used by people monthly
- B: Each transaction uses a similar amount of power to American people
- C: Each transaction uses the same amount of power as an American household
- D: Each transaction uses the same amount of power as the average American household

7. According to the paragraph, what did Benjamin A Jones suggest people should be anxious about?

- A: The pressing environmental issues
- B: The impact of climate change
- C: The problems of mining on the environment
- D: The impact of bitcoin on the environment

8. According to the paragraph, what does Jones believe politicians should do?

- A: They must confront mining operations
- B: They must confront cryptocurrency downfalls
- C: They must confront mining operations damages on the climate
- D: They must confront cryptocurrency downfalls in connection to the climate

9. Which of the following can be inferred from the passage about Cryptocurrency? Read the whole passage

- A: It has a detrimental impact on the mining industry
- B: It has a detrimental impact on technology
- C: It has a detrimental impact on the environment and climate
- D: It has a detrimental impact on American households

10. What does the paragraph suggest the level of Cryptocurrency's usage on energy consumption is?

- A: Dangerous
- B: Moderate
- C: Conservative
- D: Tolerable

11. Which of the following is not true, according to the passage? Read the whole passage

- A: Corporations do not focus on profits
- B: Corporations focus on profits

C: Investors focus on profits

D: Cryptocurrency has a destructive impact

12. The paragraph supports which of the following statements about the toxic emissions produced by mining cryptocurrency.

A: It is linked to several health issues

B: It is linked to lung cancer

C: It is linked to asthma

D: It is linked to asthma and cancer

13. Which of the following statements is not true according to the passage? Read the whole passage

A: Schools should teach about the future of cryptocurrency

B: Schools should teach about the future of mining

C: Schools should teach about the future of technology

D: Schools should teach about a new way of thinking

14. According to the paragraph, all of the following statements are true about the evolution of the effects of Cryptocurrency, except:

A: Cryptocurrency is likely to marginalise people of colour

B: Cryptocurrency is likely to marginalise American households

C: Cryptocurrency is likely to have a harmful impact on the environment

D: Cryptocurrency is likely to deepen the climate crisis

15. What does the passage suggest that cryptocurrency is exacerbating? Read the whole passage

A: Disagreement between politicians

B: The growth of health issues

C: Financial disparities

D: Environmental racism

16. According to the passage, why is mining Cryptocurrency a problem? Read the whole passage

A: Because it divides politicians

B: Because corporations lose profits

C: Because of the damaging environmental impact

D: Because policymakers are unable to agree on suitable law