

## Win-Win case study: High Street Kensington cycle lane

### What has happened so far

- The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) announced in July 2020 that it would install temporary cycle lanes on both sides of Kensington High Street. They were to be funded by TfL (Transport for London) from Government cash for schemes to discourage a “car-led recovery”. The lanes were mostly separated from car lanes by plastic “wands”. The scheme cost £300k.
- The lanes came into operation on 15 October. The expectation was that they would be in place for up to 18 months. The council promised to collect data on cycle use, journey times, air quality, casualties, etc., to assess whether the scheme was working.
- Seven weeks later they were removed. The second phase of the scheme, to redesign road junctions, had not happened.
- Johnny Thalassites, RBKC’s lead member for environment planning and place, who took the decisions to put the lanes in and then to take them out again, says “residents had complained that they couldn’t get to their houses and disability groups told me they felt in danger when being dropped off by cabs. Emergency services told me the lanes were delaying their crews. Businesses told me their customers were staying away due to traffic jams and they feared losing footfall in the run up to Christmas.”
- BetterStreets4KC, a campaigning group says that the scheme was supported by institutions like the NHS, the nearby museums of Exhibition Road, Imperial College and schools. The lanes improved safety and there was no alternative route.
- Data collection was limited by the shortness of the scheme. It looks as if the lanes led to increased cycling. A report from RBKC notes that average daily cycle flows were 50 per cent higher in the second half of October, after the lanes opened, than in the first half, when the lanes were under construction. Also, numbers halved in the second half of December, after the lanes had been removed, compared with the first half.
- BetterStreets4KC, supported by the Environmental Law Foundation, has made a legal challenge to RBKC’s decision. It is not clear where that stands.
- The council has said it will take a longer look at what the borough needs, but the timescale is unclear.
- RBKC Councillor Mary Weale said emotions had run so high that a “reconciliation process” was needed.

### What could happen – an example from Taiwan

The Taiwanese government uses an approach called vTaiwan (v is for virtual). This has four stages:

1. Use of Polis – the website is just pol.is. This asks people to say whether they agree or disagree with an initial set of 20 statements. It uses machine learning to create clusters of people with similar attitudes. It then invites people to suggest statements which command agreement across the clusters. Polis was publicised through Facebook ads and stakeholder networks.

2. A public meeting is held and broadcast, in which experts and officials respond to issues that emerged in the pol.is discussions. Transcripts of meetings are available on-line within two to three hours of the end of a meeting.
3. A stakeholder meeting, co-facilitated by civil society and the government, is held and broadcast
4. Where consensus has been reached, the government agrees either to act, or to give a point-by-point explanation of why such action is not at present feasible.

The vTaiwan system was used to decide what to do when Uber wanted to enter Taiwan and taxi drivers in Taipei, the capital, surrounded the Ministry of Transport in protest.

Polis pointed the way, because it showed areas of agreement between pro- and anti-Uber camps. The first such statement was that taxis no longer needed to be painted yellow. This was trivial, but showed that agreement was possible. Later, the following statement got 95% agreement across the board:

*The government should leverage this opportunity to challenge the taxi industry to improve their management & quality control system, so that drivers & riders would enjoy the same quality service as Uber.*

Other statements with high agreement included:

*Uber should be taxed as a transport company*

*Uber drivers should be considered employees*

In the end the process generated six policy points, all of which had at least 85 percent agreement from the participants. Stakeholder meetings built on these points. The government turned the results into regulation. This for example said that app-based taxis were free to operate, as long as they did not undercut existing meters. The whole process took a matter of weeks.

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Talk Shop – see <http://www.talkshopuk.org/win-win/>

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