



out for daily exercise or essentials. There was a huge increase in cycling at that time and people felt safer on the roads.

It worked in Ljubljana, too. After a 52% increase in car use between 2002 and 2012, politicians set out on a radical plan to limit motor vehicles and instead give greater priority to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. Numerous measures were introduced, including pedestrianisation across more than 10 hectares of the city centre, which I enjoyed so much on my holiday. It's no surprise that 13% of journeys in the city are now cycled – compared to just under 2% nationally in the UK.

PUT PEOPLE FIRST

There's no reason why these benefits can't be experienced by people in towns, cities, and villages across the UK. Our politicians should follow the lead of their European counterparts by transforming places for people, and being bold and steadfast in their decisions. It also takes organisations like Cycling UK to speak up and explain why the country would benefit from less traffic and how quieter roads and peaceful places designed for people, not cars, are key to enabling more people to cycle and feel the benefits.

Cycling UK's mission is to enable millions more to cycle, but we know that it's not enough just to call for more dedicated, safe cycling infrastructure. Not every road can accommodate a cycle lane and not every roundabout in the country is going to be made safe for cycling within the next few years. To enable people to cycle and for governments to meet climate targets, we have to cut the number of journeys taken by car – especially those shorter everyday local trips. Did you know that 60% of all car journeys in England are under five miles, a distance that many people could cycle?

It's a huge challenge but Ljubljana – together with many other cities – shows that it's possible in a relatively short time. Paris is limiting cars crossing the city, and pedestrianising parts of the city centre ahead of the Olympics. Barcelona's 'superblocks' initiative aims to put people before cars. Ghent in Belgium introduced a city 'circulation plan' in 2017, which dramatically cut car travel in the centre and consequently also decreased collisions, increased bus use, boosted cycling from 22% of journeys to 37%, and created a more peaceful, people-centred place to live. ▶



predicts that the numbers of cars on the roads in England and Wales will increase by as much as 54% by 2060.

Even now, without that future growth in traffic, we have serious congestion blighting many of our towns and cities. It makes our communities dirty, noisy, busy and dangerous, robs children of the freedom to ride to school, and traps some older people in their homes. Something has to change but are any of political parties brave enough to tackle this thorny issue and make the places we live in people friendly rather than car centric?

A survey by Sustrans revealed that 62% of people agree it would help people cycle more if there was less motor vehicle traffic on the streets. So, if we did make neighbourhoods more peaceful and roads quieter, would more people really cycle?

This did happen during the first Covid lockdown, when people only ventured

Clockwise from top left:

Stonemason Steve Roche has saved time and money, and lost weight, by switching from driving to e-cycling. Two views of Ljubljana, Slovenia, 60 miles and a world away from Trieste