

WE NEED A DEBATE ABOUT KERBSIDE USAGE

WE NEED ACTION NOW ON KERBSIDE USAGE

Why did the headless chicken cross the road?

By Dan Hubert

“Why did the headless chicken cross the road? To see what was on the other side”. Destination data or rather the lack of it is the fundamental reason why 40 million UK motorists run around like headless chickens at an enormous economic and environmental cost to UK plc. £37.7 billion a year is robbed from the UK economy in terms of lost productivity and 122 million tonnes of carbon dioxide billows from the exhaust pipes of motorists all on a road to nowhere. That contributes to 1/3rd of all UK emissions.

Over the last ten years, I've been digging into the business models of the kerb to find out the root cause of the problem and why this public service is doing UK plc a huge disservice. The problem is so deeply and systemically engrained in the culture of kerbside management that it would take a cataclysmic global disaster to make the Government think outside the box. As luck would have it, COP27 is upon us and the news is now filled with scientifically proven headlines that we are going to miss the 1.5°C target by a country mile.

The Kerbside Taskforce

A coalition of organisations led by TRL keen to stimulate a debate about the need for a fresh look at the issues surrounding use of the kerbside.

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A rise of 3°C in global temperatures above pre-industrial levels by 2100 would be disastrous. Its effects would be felt differently around the world, but nowhere would be immune. Prolonged heat waves, droughts and extreme weather events could all become increasingly common and severe. Worryingly, slow progress from governments in cutting emissions makes this a very plausible scenario.

There is no magic pill to suck all the carbon away and we can't just wait for governments to save the planet. The historic words of JFK, "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country," challenged every American to contribute in some way to the public good.

So, how does every individual in the UK, or the world for that matter, incrementally help reduce their carbon footprint and collectively do their bit to save the world? Smart energy metres have done a great job of displaying energy consumption in the comfort of our home, making us feel very uncomfortable about boiling the kettle and obsessively causing us to turn every light off regardless of if we're sitting in the room or not.

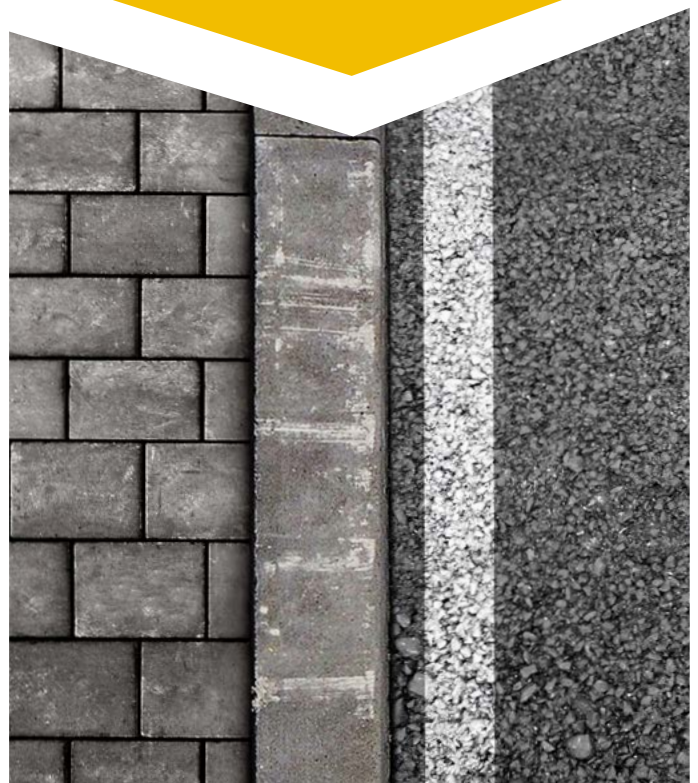
Despite humans mostly being a bunch of technophobes, we all respond quite well to information and being told what we can and can't do. Take how we avidly watched the news every night proudly united in our contribution towards flattening the curve, a public health strategy to slow down the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. This only worked by a critical mass of data collection being shared so team Cobra could make data-driven decisions. Who would have thought that the nation would willingly use tracking apps to detect close encounters of the Covid-19 kind and then scurry home to self-isolate.

As recent history has shown, governments can move mountains and stop countries to stop a pandemic. So why on earth is the UK government so slow to do their bit for the world knowing that a 3rd of UK CO2 comes from 40 million UK-registered vehicles. If every journey is a parking disaster waiting to happen, we basically need to tap into a dataset of digital kerbside maps that the public sector manages and stores in the cloud. We can then all rejoice at a better destination and enjoy true A to B journeys, rather than wasting valuable time, money and fuel driving somewhere around B. Right? Wrong!



Sadly in the year 2023, the world of kerbside management within local authorities is still extremely analogue, fragmented, siloed and protracted. 200 of the 400 authorities have kerbside regulation obligations and are legally required to use the Traffic Order Act (TRO) of 1984 as their guiding light. But in the ten years that I've been working and speaking to local authorities, I've not yet met one local authority that follows the same process from end to end. This ambiguity, subjectiveness and interpretation of the TRO law result in 200 individual local authorities collectively spending 1 billion pounds per year managing their kerbside network.

Reading this you'll probably be thinking that electric vehicles can solve all our woes. Sadly things are a bit flat in the world of EV too. While billions have been poured into funding the rollout of privately managed on-street charge points, actual live deployment numbers are woefully behind the target. OZEV has said that 1 in 3 motorists without a driveway need on-street charge points. Councils do not have the data or software to speed up the bottleneck created by the outdated TRO regulation to reach the 300,000 charge points needed for 2030. To add insult to injury, the majority of councils do not have an EV strategy. The charging company Liberty Charge has found that only 14% of councils have resources dedicated to delivering charge points and a lack of government funding means they can only allocate 15 hours per week to EV projects.



► Quality granular destination information will turn motorists from headless chickens into fully optimised heat-seeking homing pigeons. To achieve this, councils need authoritative digital maps. This will not only optimise their bloated internal £1billion cost, but dramatically reduce miles for every vehicle and ideally persuade drivers to choose active travel instead. Unfortunately, local authorities are the unsuspecting perpetrator in this slow-motion global disaster drama

because central government has passed on all the management and accountability without any direction whatsoever. Local authorities are screaming out for more cash to meet the onslaught of new kerbside demands being suffocated by antiquated regulation. At the same time, central government keeps slashing their funding, hindering any aspirations of digital transformation or out-of-the-box thinking.

Now the revolving doors of Number 10 have stopped spinning, hopefully ministers and their special advisors will take heed of the gargantuan challenge, and opportunity, ahead and look to industry experts like members of The Kerbside Taskforce. This epidemic needs top-down leadership, we've got the technology, the know-how and we've got the scars to prove it. There are some very achievable, rapid and cost-effective ways to digitise the UK's kerbside and turn four inches of concrete that's right under their feet into a golden goose. All ministers love standing next to shiny new things for a photo opp. Surely they would love something that leaves the next 'Boris Bike' for their personal legacy while doing something that helps save the planet.



The Author

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Founder & CEO Dan founded AppyWay in 2013 after being continually frustrated with the same bad parking experiences shared by most drivers across the UK. After extensive research, Dan realised that the analogue and siloed solutions within the parking and highways sector were the cause of the problem. His vision was to create a digitised, standardised and centralised platform uniting the public and private sector with authoritative data that can help local governments on their road to decarbonisation and helps create a better kerbside experience for fleets and mobility. Nine years later AppyWay is the world's most awarded intelligent kerbside platform.