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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Londoners urged to swap cars for spacehoppers on World Car Free Day



Schoolchildren and campaigners took part in a ‘hop past’ outside City Hall this morning to launch a London-wide Play Street Pledge ahead of World Car Free Day.

London’s Walking and Cycling Commissioner, Will Norman, and Deputy Mayor for Transport, Heidi Alexander, joined London leaders in encouraging Londoners to organise their own play street this September.

Representatives from 16 London boroughs signed up to a pledge committing them to promoting, supporting and approving as many play streets in their boroughs as they can to

mark the global event. It's hoped at least 200 streets across the capital will be transformed into temporary play spaces on Sunday 22nd September, which is World Car Free Day.

Play streets are simple, resident-organised events where neighbours on a road agree together to close their street temporarily, but regularly, to through traffic. This allows children to play, while adults watch and get to know each other better over a cup of tea. They are already happening all over London and further afield – and offer an easy way for people to participate in World Car Free Day.

Charity London Play has been leading the capital's play street revival for the past decade and Transport for London is providing funding that will enable it to help more Londoners to trial play streets on Car Free Day. It is hoped that the experience of seeing their street in a new light, as valuable community space rather than parking space for cars, will inspire many to go on to apply for regular play street closures following the September event.

Anyone who wants to see their street become a play space on Car Free Day will need to consult their neighbours and apply to their local council well in advance of the day. The launch of the pledge is timed to inspire people to act sooner rather than later.

Applying is free, but the process differs from borough to borough and London Play will help by advising on the various procedures; supporting with materials for promoting and consulting on play streets; and for early applicants, providing play equipment to kick start the fun. Additionally, all streets taking part will go into a prize draw to win an on street go kart building session.

The Mayor of London has also committed to work with boroughs and community organisations to deliver the biggest Car Free Day London has ever seen - much larger than what other cities have managed to achieve so far.

Those interested in turning their street into a play space on Car Free Day should get in touch with London Play via info@londonplay.org.uk or call 0203 384 8510. And it is not too late for councils to sign up to the pledge! Get in touch using the same details.

Will Norman, London's Walking and Cycling Commissioner, said: "I'm really pleased that our support for London Play will help people swap their car-dominated roads for play streets on World Car Free Day.

"Transforming neighbourhoods gives Londoners the opportunity to get to know their

neighbours, strengthening their community. It will also help build on our work to reduce reliance on cars and clean up our toxic air.”

Paul Hocker, director of London Play said: “For 364 days a year the car is king in the capital, but on September 22nd it’s all change. Car Free Day brings clean air, community fun and play on the street to London. The response from people last year to get involved was overwhelming. London Play expects to be overwhelmed again this year and we can’t wait.”

Cllr Claire Holland, Deputy Leader of Lambeth Council said: “Car Free Day is a fantastic way to showcase how much more enjoyable local, residential roads can be for everyone in the community if they are closed to through traffic. It’s always a great day to see kids able to play out on their street, and here in Lambeth we will be doing all that we can to support communities to put on events and to make this year’s Car Free Day even bigger.”

Cllr Gareth Richards, Richmond Council’s Cycling Champion said:

“Last year we had a terrific response to the Car Free Day play streets in Richmond. Our residents exceeded our expectations turning 30 streets into play spaces (more than any other London borough). This year we hope to show how rich and rewarding our streets can be when not singularly devoted to cars and traffic.”

Cllr Richard Livingstone, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport Management

and Air Quality at Southwark Council said: “I’m delighted to be joining so many other respected London councils and organisations, in signing the Car Free Day Play Street pledge. This is a wonderful opportunity to open up our streets and return them to the people who live on them, creating a chance for communities to come together and play. Here in Southwark we are working to close the streets outside our schools at pick and drop-off times, we encourage residents to come to us to open Play Streets on their roads and we will be having lots of fun on Car Free Day as well.”

Cllr Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor for Regeneration and Air Quality at Tower Hamlets

Council said: “Play streets are a brilliant way to encourage kids to play out, get active and have fun. Tower Hamlets launched our first play street last month and is planning more as part of our Breathe Clean campaign.”

More high-quality images of the launch are available by contacting Fiona Sutherland via fiona@londonplay.org.uk or on 07711 888 602.

Notes to editors

1. London Play is a small charity that strives to get more children in London playing out more often. We promote children's right to play, campaign for more and improved out-of-school play services for London's 1.8m children and young people, and support play providers in the capital. We also directly provide more play opportunities for children by supporting groups to develop play streets, building nature play areas and running events.
2. Play street legislation has been around since the late 1930s. Having peaked at around 700 across London and England in the 1950s, play streets had all but disappeared by the 80s with the rise in private car ownership. London Play has been leading the capital's play street revival since 2008; and has worked with more than two thirds of London boroughs and their residents to bring play back to the streets of London. One-off events like Car Free Day create a perfect opportunity for people to experience car free streets and the possibilities for other, community-enhancing uses of the valuable space outside their front doors.
3. The full wording of the play street pledge is as follows:
CAR FREE DAY PLAY STREET PLEDGE
 - We agree that streets are a valuable public resource
 - We would like to explore alternative uses for streets which act positively to bring communities together and reduce the dominance of cars, parked or moving.
 - We believe that World Car Free Day offers an ideal opportunity to try this out and will promote this with our residents
 - We will make it easy for local people to open their streets for play on World Car Free Day 2019. We will remove charges and minimise the bureaucracy involved
 - We will approve as many play streets as we can for Car Free Day 2019
4. The full list of London borough signatories to the pledge is:
 - Brent: Cllr Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment
 - Camden: Cllr Adam Harrison - Cabinet member for improving Camden's environment
 - Croydon: Cllr Stuart King - Cabinet member for Environment, Transport & Regeneration
 - Ealing: Cllr Julian Bell – Council Leader
 - Enfield: Cabinet member for the Environment
 - Greenwich: Cllr Denise Scott-MacDonald - Cabinet Member for Air Quality, Public Realm and Transport
 - Hammersmith and Fulham: Cllr Wesley Harcourt – Cabinet Member for the Environment
 - Haringey: Cllr Sheila Peacock – Deputy Mayor
 - Lambeth: Cllr Claire Holland – Deputy Leader and Member for Clean Air and the Environment
 - Lewisham: Cllr Sophie McGeevor, Cabinet Member for Environment
 - Newham: Cllr Zulfiqar Ali – Cabinet Member for Highways and Sustainable Transport
 - Redbridge: Cllr Jas Athwal – Council Leader
 - Richmond: Cllr Alexander Ehmman – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transport, Streetscene and Air Quality
 - Southwark: Cllr Richard Livingstone – Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport Management & Air Quality
 - Tower Hamlets: Cllr Denise Jones – Cabinet Member for Health and Adults
 - Waltham Forest: Cllr Clyde Loakes – Deputy Leader
5. London Play is grateful for the support of Transport for London in funding its work to bring more of the capital's streets alive with play. Other funders include the National Lottery, Mayor of London, City Bridge Trust, and the Tudor Trust.

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