

READING COMPREHENSION

B2 | Adults / Teens | Reading + Vocabulary | 45-60 minutes

Topic: Travel | Skills: Reading, Vocabulary, Speaking

Read the text carefully. Then answer the questions on Page 2.

When a Shortcut Becomes the Main Road

The new walking app promised visitors a quieter route through Belford. Instead of following the crowded shopping street, users were directed along a narrow lane behind the houses. Its recommendation was accurate: the lane was shorter, greener and, initially, almost empty. Within a month, however, the shortcut was receiving a **steady stream** of people following identical instructions.

Residents did not object to walking itself. The lane was a public route, and several neighbours had **campaigned** to keep it open. Their frustration concerned the app's description of it as an "undiscovered corner", which encouraged visitors to pause beside kitchen windows and photograph what they imagined was an untouched local scene. Some residents put up curtains; one stopped using her front room in the afternoons.

The app company argued that it was helping distribute visitors more evenly. Local shopkeepers supported this aim, although those on the main street complained that customers were now passing behind their businesses. A proposal to remove the lane from the app pleased some residents but worried others, who feared that making a public route invisible would benefit only people who already knew it existed.

At a meeting, a resident suggested a **compromise**: keep the route, remove the romantic description and offer several alternatives rather than directing everyone along one path. The company agreed to test the change. Visitor numbers fell slightly, but the lane did not return to its earlier quietness.

The experiment revealed a limit to the idea of a perfect recommendation. A route can be pleasant partly because few people use it. Once that quality becomes the reason everyone is sent there, the advice begins to **undermine** itself. Better information may help, but it cannot guarantee that every advantage survives being shared.

Key vocabulary

steady stream - a continuous flow of people or things

campaigned - worked actively to achieve a social or political goal

compromise - an agreement in which each side accepts less than it wanted

undermine - gradually weaken something

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

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Answer in complete sentences. Support interpretations with evidence from the text.

1. Why was the app's original recommendation initially accurate?

2. Why did the description of the lane bother residents?

3. Why did some people oppose removing the route from the app?

4. What three changes did the resident's compromise involve?

5. What does the incomplete return to quiet suggest?

6. Explain how the recommendation began to undermine itself.

Discuss with a partner

- Should a public route ever be excluded from a travel app?
- How can recommendations spread visitors without moving the problem elsewhere?

ANSWER KEY

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Suggested full-sentence answers. Accept other supported interpretations where appropriate.

1. Why was the app's original recommendation initially accurate?

The lane was initially shorter, greener and less crowded than the shopping street.

2. Why did the description of the lane bother residents?

The romantic description encouraged visitors to treat residents' homes as scenery and intrude on their privacy.

3. Why did some people oppose removing the route from the app?

They feared removal would restrict knowledge of a public route to people who already knew about it.

4. What three changes did the resident's compromise involve?

It involved keeping the route, removing the romantic description and offering alternative routes.

5. What does the incomplete return to quiet suggest?

It suggests that changing a recommendation cannot necessarily reverse all the effects of making a place popular.

6. Explain how the recommendation began to undermine itself.

The app attracted people because the lane was quiet, but the visitors it attracted reduced that quietness.

Teaching notes

Read once for the main idea, then reread for evidence. Compare answers before discussing the two open questions. Interpretive answers may vary; ask learners to justify their reading.

Language and reading focus: Concession and qualification; cause and unintended consequences.

Text: Original commentary using a fictional scenario. Discussion questions have no fixed answers.