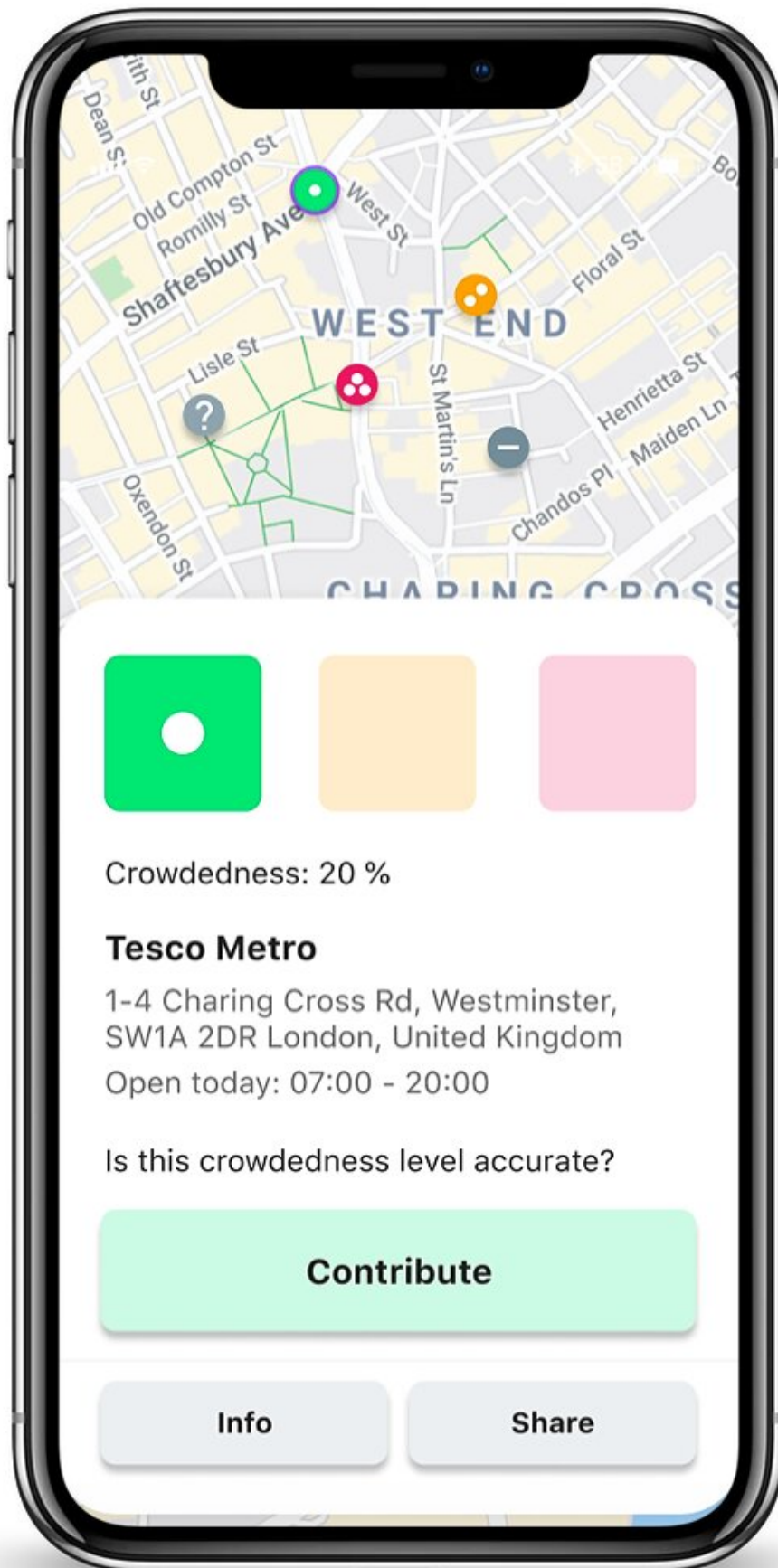


Social distancing app uses space to save lives

April 20 2020



Credit: Lanterne

A free app that helps people observe social distancing to slow the spread of coronavirus is about to launch.

Devised by Lanterne, a UK start-up company supported by ESA, it uses [satellite data](#) and [artificial intelligence technologies](#) to identify where people are congregating anywhere in the world.

People who need to leave home to go to the supermarket or the pharmacy can check before they depart whether the shops are becoming crowded. If there are too many people, they can delay their trip until its less busy or switch to less-crowded shops nearby.

The "Crowdless" app uses anonymised existing data sources, such as Google Maps and Google Places data, that track the movements of mobile devices. It combines this information with crowd-sourced data by asking the user to confirm whether or not the location is busy.

Lanterne co-founders Alex Barnes, Yohan Iddawela and Sebastian Mueller created the app by applying the skills and knowledge they gained while developing their core product, which is designed to help people in [conflict zones](#) to navigate safely.

It took them just three days to create the app and it has since gone through six further prototypes over the past four weeks.

Yohan Iddawela said: "The mission of our social enterprise, Lanterne, is to use data to improve safety and promote economic development. As a

result, we wanted to see what we could do with our skillset to help people out at such a trying time.

"Our hope is that 'Crowdless' can help people observe social distancing more effectively, stay safe and play a part in slowing down the infection rate of COVID-19. We are also committed to ensuring that this remains 100% free for everyone to use."

Sue O'Hare, Operations Manager for the ESA Business Incubation Centre in the UK, said: "Lanterne is a magnificent example of how space and satellite technologies can be used and adapted to create globally game-changing ways to help the world in the war against COVID-19."

"I'm thrilled that the Science and Technology Facilities Council, through the ESA Business Incubation Centre UK, has provided Lanterne with the right technologies and support it needed to develop this ground-breaking and ultimately life-saving technology."

Nick Appleyard, Head of Business Applications at ESA, said: "One of ESA's main priorities is safety and security, assured from space. We are all taking care to maintain social distancing and to avoid crowds, and looking forward to the day that we can resume more normal day-to-day lives. This app can help to bring that day forwards, and to keep us all safe as we do so."

Crowdless is [publicly available for free download on iOS](#) and [on Android](#).

Provided by European Space Agency

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