Reference answers

Task 1 Open-ended.

Task 2

1.

- Drones are widely used in commercial settings. They are of high commercial value in transportation.
- Driverless cars are a revolutionary form of transportation that replaces humans behind the wheel with artificial intelligence.
- Hyperloops travel in a vacuum tube and are propelled by magnetic levitation. In this way, they can reach a high speed.

2. I think Hyperloops will have the biggest impact, because they can save both our time and energy.

Academic listening

Listening 1 Drone-free skies

Audio script

Drone-free skies

PRESENTER: Good morning and welcome to the show. I'm joined today by Angela Lewis, leader of the "Drone-Free Skies" campaign. Welcome to the show, Angela.

ANGELA: Thank you. It's good to be here.

PRESENTER: Angela, tell us about your campaign. What are you trying to achieve?

ANGELA: Well, as the name suggests, we're trying to keep the sky free from drones. We believe drones are dangerous, noisy, and, above all, unnecessary.

PRESENTER: OK, but can you tell us why you started your campaign?

ANGELA: Well, the park near my house is very popular with so-called "drone pilots," racing their dangerous toys around all day. It's totally irresponsible, and on weekends, the noise is unbearable! Believe me, these trouble-makers don't care if their noise pollution destroys other people's lives. Anyway, one day about three years ago, one of the pilots lost control of his drone and it crashed through my son's bedroom window and landed on his bed. It is very lucky he wasn't seriously injured.

PRESENTER: That sounds terrifying! Was your son in bed at the time?

ANGELA: Er … no. He was away in university. But it was then that I realized that something had to be done.

PRESENTER: OK, so we'll come back to you in a moment, Angela. But first I'd like to introduce our second guest, Victor Young, who is here on behalf of the National Drone Club. Victor, do you agree that drones are just toys, and that the pilots are irresponsible?

VICTOR: Well, of course, some people do use them as toys, and yes, a small number of pilots aren't as responsible as they should be. But we're talking about a tiny, tiny percentage of the total number here. Commercial drones are rapidly becoming a vital part of our economy, and they perform essential tasks that humans simply cannot otherwise do.

PRESENTER: Can you give us an example?

VICTOR: Sure. Well, I work in the oil business, and we have a network of oil pipelines all over the country. Now, all of those pipelines need to be checked regularly in order to predict, and to prevent, potential leaks. Without

drones, you need to send a team of highly trained inspectors to conduct a manual examination of each section of pipelines – many of which aren't in easily accessible places like cities! It's extremely slow and expensive. If one of your pipelines starts leaking, it'll take forever to find the leak. And by the time you finally fix it, it will have been leaking for months. But with a drone equipped with a few simple cameras, we can examine whole pipelines in a few hours, not months. And when we identify a problem, we can send in another drone, equipped with various tools, to fix it. We use computers to steer the drones, which means the whole process can be controlled by a single engineer in our headquarters, hundreds of miles away. So, Angela is totally wrong when she claims drones are just silly toys.

PRESENTER: Right. So, what about safety?

VICTOR: Well, the statistics speak for themselves. The number of serious accidents involving drones is tiny. In this country, there hasn't been a single death or serious injury involving drones – not one – over the past three years, and only a handful of minor accidents. If we compare that with the safety record of cars, where there are thousands of deaths and injuries every year, it's clear that drones are incredibly safe.

PRESENTER: Angela?

ANGELA: Well, there are far more cars than drones, so it doesn't make sense to compare those figures. And the drone that crashed into my house was certainly dangerous. Presumably, Victor would describe it as another minor accident, not really worth worrying about, but it was absolutely terrifying at the time. But the bigger point I was making is that drones have a potential to do enormous damage, especially if they crash into an airplane. And as the number of drones grows, the potential for serious accidents will increase dramatically.

VICTOR: In that case, surely the answer is to establish rules to prevent accidents, rather than simply banning all drones. And that's what we're trying to do in the National Drone Club: We want to make sure that the skies remain safe for everybody.

PRESENTER: So, it sounds like you share similar goals. Angela, is safety your only concern?

ANGELA: Far from it! For me, the biggest issue is privacy. I don't want drones filming me in my house or my back yard. That's my private space, and nobody else has a right to fly over it.

PRESENTER: Victor?

VICTOR: Well, again, this is about regulation. You're right that drones shouldn't film you or fly too close to your house, so we just need good rules stating what drones can and can't do. But remember that most drones these days are used for commercial reasons – they distribute parcels, or look for oil leaks in remote pipelines, or whatever. I can assure you they're not trying to film you in your back yard!

ANGELA: OK, maybe "most drones" are harmless – I don't know. But there are billions of drones out there that aren't harmless. You seem to think that rules and regulations can solve the problem, but how on earth will regulators be able to distinguish the good drones from the bad ones? Until you can give us a satisfactory answer to that question, I'm afraid I'm going to continue the campaign for drone-free skies.

PRESENTER: Right, well thanks to both of you for your comments. We're going to take a break right now, but we'll be back in a few minutes.

Words and expressions

campaign *n.* 活动；运动
unbearable *adj.* 难以忍受的；承受不住的
pipeline *n.* 管道
accessible *adj.* 易到达的；易进入的
steer *v.* 控制；驾驶
presumably *adv.* 可能，大概