

Environment Committee**23 June 2011****Transcript of Item 6: Update on a Possible Inner London Clean Air Zone**

Murad Qureshi (Chair): For the Assembly Members I have got to remind you we are, unfortunately, half an hour behind but I intend to still have the item on the Inner London Clean Air Zone dealt with, within half an hour, as soon as our expert witnesses come down.

I will explain the context of this item. This did come up at the last Plenary where a motion was put. Unfortunately it was not able to be addressed but, given the nature of this issue, it is probably better if we hear from some experts on their views on the possibility of having this Inner London Clean Air Zone, similar to the one they have in Berlin. Since the announcement to cover this item at this meeting we have had two reports come out, literally overnight. One from the City of London Corporation and also from Transport for London (TfL) itself. There is plenty of material there to cover. It is not just an issue for next summer and for the Olympics; it is something we need to address to deal with Londoners' health problems in central London.

Can I ask Simon Birkett, the leading advocate for this Inner London Clean Air Zone, to give us five minutes of why he thinks it is a good idea and then we will have a response from TfL who has looked at some of the practicalities and why they feel it is more difficult than it may be suggested? Simon, the floor is yours.

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): Thank you very much. London needs one or more additional inner Low Emission Zones now and in fact two years ago. The main reason for these air quality measures are to protect health. Earlier this week Clean Air in London published information about the first research about the first causal link between asthma and proximity to traffic related air pollution.

What was not picked up so much by the coverage of that was the fact of the impact on attributable deaths. I have often congratulated the Mayor for publishing the estimate of 4,300 premature deaths in 2008 but it is clear from evidence produced by the Committee on the medical effects of air pollutants, in December last year, that that number of 4,300 are dying on average 11.5 years early. Now that number is a pure number eliminating 40 statistical variables. What that same Committee said is that the more likely practical impact of bad air quality in London and nationally is everyone who is dying of cardiovascular causes, which are those through heart attacks and strokes, which in London was 15,800 people in 2008, are losing, on average, sadly, an additional three years of life due to long term exposure to bad air quality. This is as bad an air pollution crisis as we thought we had in 1952.

In addition to the health issues there is a legal framework. I will not dwell on that because we are very familiar with that.

There is also the small matter of the Olympics, which you have been looking into earlier today. The Olympics is assuming that there has to be a 30% reduction in background levels of traffic to make the Olympic Route Network operate satisfactorily. At the moment that is being done, as far as I can see, simply by trying to persuade people not to come and work in London for 100 days between the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Paralympics.

There are two traditional ways to do that. The first is through this big scare tactic where the expectations of Londoners would be manipulated, telling them it is going to be bad to drive into London, even if it will not be. The second traditional way is the Beijing approach which was a last minute odd and even number plate ban.

We have a health issue, a legal issue and an issue for the Olympics. There is a simple solution to all of these problems/challenges and that is an inner Low Emission Zone. It is one of a whole raft of measures that need to be adopted. Berlin said that it was the most important single air quality measure it has taken. It has 40 of these in its inner city areas.

This week the City of London Corporation has produced an incredibly impressive report which shows that the introduction of an inner Low Emission Zone, either in the central Congestion Charging area - or up to the north/south circular perhaps by 2015 to address also the particular problem we have for this 100 days next year - would ensure that it would provide a margin of safety to ensure that the daily limit value of the bad air days are not exceeded.

As an aside, what it has also shown - and I will not dwell on this - quite astonishingly that there are a number of technical solutions; the introduction of Euro 6 engines, electric, bio methane and so on. It has shown, for the first time I have ever seen, that it is technically possible to achieve full compliance with the nitrogen dioxide limit values by January 2015, which the Government is saying cannot be done until 2025. I urge people to look at that report.

Finally what I would say is that the Transport for London report which has looked at this - I saw it shortly before this meeting - is a very good report in as far as it goes, however, it does seem to me to be predicated on several very flawed assumptions. For example, it is predicated on the assumption that we can choose when we comply with public health law deadlines. It has specifically said that the Berlin model would be quick and easy to implement and then it says it is not looking at that. It does not, by not looking and setting compliance with deadlines, have to look strictly at the practical choice of saying, "Do we want a Euro 4 standard - which is pre-2006 - at the M25 or do we want it in the most polluted part of town?" There is a great opportunity here to introduce a Clean Air Zone for the 100 days of the Olympics, keep part of it at least thereafter and demonstrate the cleanest, greenest and most sustainable Games ever.

Murad Qureshi (Chair): Thank you, Simon, for that. I reinforce the Olympic point having been, myself, to the last two Olympics. It certainly was an issue in Athens for visibility of the city. Most people could see the Acropolis after the initiatives they took in Athens and in Beijing it clearly was the main environmental issue during Games time. Thankfully they were on top of it so it did not affect the athletes' performances.

Can I now move to TfL? The Mayor mentioned that you had done this work at the last Mayor's Question Time (MQT) and was looking forward to presenting the arguments. Peter [Wright], can I leave it to you to talk through your response to the Inner London Clean Air Zone? I know a number of Assembly Members have been writing and putting in MQTs about this. Your response please? I am sure Simon Cousins will come in as well.

Peter Wright (Policy Manager (Planning), TfL): First of all thank you for inviting us back. I know it is something that came up in the January 2011 Committee meeting; to look into this in more detail. I know you have been asking lots of questions through Question Time as well. We have been doing the background work to try to help answer this.

Just to emphasise, any Low Emission Zone is one element of the Mayor's Air Quality Strategy. I know that Simon [Birkett] mentioned about the timescales and the standards. This was looking at a feasibility study and that is what Transport for London has done for how it would work. It is part of a wider package of measures that the Mayor has already set out.

Overall the analysis looked at three different options for London; a central area Emission Zone, an inner London Low Emission Zone out to the north and south circular and then also the wider London-wide options. Also looking at the 2013 implementation times, the 2015. We also looked at it against the current operation of the Low Emission Zone using camera enforcement, with similar timescales and fine arrangements.

To clarify, we did not include the Berlin-style - although saying it can be quick and easy to implement if you already have the national framework in place to operate it, but we do not have that national framework in the UK and to try to introduce it without having a national framework was considered too difficult --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Could you say what national framework you would need?

Peter Wright (Policy Manager (Planning), TfL): The national framework in Berlin is every car has a sticker and every vehicle has an emissions amount that is associated with it and any city then can say, "I'll only allow in those with a blue sticker, a yellow sticker or a red sticker" depending on what level of pollution they are. The whole country has that. They sets whatever standard they want for that city. The 40 zones that Simon refers to, each city can say how high or low they want to set that standard. We do not have that in the UK and every vehicle would have to have something like that and then be enforced on the street, which is why the Berlin system works as it does.

One of the other things that we have mentioned before is whether we would include the Western Extension. That was not considered feasible because of the camera infrastructure after the removal in December 2010 so we do not have that in place anymore. Also taxis and private hire vehicles are already included in other parts of the Strategy.

There is a summary table at the end of the report, which you have probably seen. The biggest impact; unsurprisingly, if you cover inner London as well as central London, you affect more vehicles and therefore you have greater reductions in emissions. The highest benefits in terms of air pollutant reductions would be for a Euro 5 standard for light goods vehicles (LGVs) and cars. In an inner London Zone saving around 50 tonnes of particulate matter and just over 400 tonnes of nitrogen oxides. With that is the cost of compliance of around £1 billion for light goods vehicles and £1.5 billion for cars. This is taken on top of expecting the current standards introduced in the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) phase three and four in the beginning of next year.

For comparison, LEZ phase five would cost just over £200 million and would save nearly double the amount of nitrogen dioxide when considered across the whole of London. Even a less stringent Euro 4 standard for cars would cost around £300 million in compliance costs and would have ten tonnes of particulate and nearly 200 tonnes of nitrogen dioxide. An equivalent of the LEZ phase three would save nearly double that in particulate matters and nearly 300 tonnes of nitrogen dioxide in the first year.

One thing as we were going through this report - that has not gone into a full equalities impact assessment - was it is quite clear that the older vehicles driven by the poorest individuals or by small businesses, charities and community organisations would be the most affected by having a standard that introduced anything that was as tight. The Euro 5 standard would have a vehicle that anything over four years old as a car would be too old to drive into any Zone.

Overall, from a technical point of view, the cost of implementing the scheme as we went through in the paper looking at both inner and central options, not just set up costs which would also be required and public information campaigns and additional signage etc, but it is the compliance costs of vehicle owners and operators that would be the greatest impact against the environmental and health benefits.

Broadly speaking, the technical point of view was that it would outweigh the benefits. That does not necessarily mean, with the nitrogen oxides and smaller particulate matters, say down to PM_{2.5}, it would become more important. Something like this would not be unfeasible in future years but it is the amount of time that would be required both to implement it and then for people to comply with it. The longer that people have in advance the less the compliance costs would be.

We are more than happy to look at any other options as they are suggested but, for the time being, those were the findings from our study.

Murad Qureshi (Chair): Simon Cousins, are you going to add anything to what Peter has just said?

Simon Cousins (Environment Programme Officer, GLA): Probably just a couple of points. Firstly, Simon [Birkett] mentioned health impacts across London and the report that came out recently. That is why we are taking a pan-London approach. The new standard Low Emission Zone coming in in January 2012 will ensure cleaner air across the whole of London and benefit all Londoners. Also of course we are planning to introduce a nitrogen oxide (NO_x) standard to the Low Emission Zone in 2015, subject to Government support. We are taking action across all of London, which I think is important.

If we are talking about cars in particular there is emerging evidence about the poor performance in terms of emissions for NO_x and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) of Euro 4 and Euro 5 cars. We have to be very wary of doing anything that is going to encourage an uptake of those standard vehicles.

Murad Qureshi (Chair): I am going to ask two very quick questions and then I will hand it to Mike [Tuffrey] and Darren [Johnson]. I am not envisaging that we are going to come to any vote or anything like this because this is not the place for that. We are just going to hear views and opinions. Already, in some ways, we have been more informed than we would have done if we had an exchange at Plenary.

Simon [Birkett], could it really be as bad as 1952? You suggested that in terms of the health impact.

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): It is. This is not looking for a headline; this is fact. In December 1952 there were 4,075 early deaths due to short term exposure to air pollution. We did not know then about the long term impacts. We have only known about the long term impacts of air pollution on health since the late 1990s and the last decade. That number is really where the Mayor's 4,300 has come from; the long term impacts. Now we are actually understanding, as recently as last December, that the practical impact on Londoners is those mainly dying due to cardiovascular causes. That is one in three Londoners losing, on average, an additional three years of life due to long term exposure to dangerous air borne particles. That, to me, is something as shocking and on the scale of the crisis we faced in 1952. That is not just me picking those numbers out of the air.

Murad Qureshi (Chair): A point well made. The TfL report did not appear to give much emphasis at all to the health cost or benefits costs. I am not sure how that happened. It appears to have been kept out of the analysis. The health impacts, as they are such, did not seem to be part of the narrative in your report.

Peter Wright (Policy Manager (Planning), TfL): We were looking at the actual amounts of emissions that would be reduced. We have not done a full detailed health impact assessment associated with those in the way that Simon is referring to. That is really partly a question for the Mayoral adviser on what choices they would like to make around the costs of implementing something against the health disbenefit.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Thank you. I wanted to follow up on that. Firstly, thank you very much for doing the study. You will appreciate we did not get it until 6pm yesterday so I have literally done nothing more than read the executive summary. Thank you all for coming but this clearly is only the start of the process we will need to go along with you.

I think we are confusing two things. Is targeting measures where the problem is worse effective or not effective? Question one. Your study, it seems to me, answers that. It is effective. In other words, if you target where the problem is worse, you get a benefit in terms of reducing the pollutants. That, seems to me, a finding from your study. That is certainly the finding from the Corporation of London. That is ticking that box. You have been good enough to reference my own plan so thank you for looking at that. I am regarding this study as confirming that if you target your measures you get a beneficial impact on the pollution.

The second question, which you have also addressed, is what then are the costs of meeting certain standards? Clearly the higher the standards and the quicker you do them the greater the cost. That is a second question. That is - you referred to the Mayoral policy adviser - a policy question. What standards do we want to achieve by when and at what cost? Clearly there is a high cost associated with that and it is good to have those numbers but, as the Chair said, you have not done a cost benefit analysis. You simply said, "It's a very high cost therefore we conclude it is too high". The analysis to conclude that it is too high is not there. You have not, it seems to me, put a value on human life, which normally one does in cost benefit terms. You have not done the cost benefit equation. You have simply said, "High cost therefore bad idea". That is a policy matter. I am just suggesting that it seems to me, going forward, we need to disaggregate is it sensible to target measures? Answer, yes. Then what measures do we want by when and at what cost? Second question which we come back to and debate. Is that a helpful distinction? Can you tell me whether my reading from the executive summary is helpful in that respect?

Peter Wright (Policy Manager (Planning), TfL): The point around targeted measures already considered to have the most benefit; actually a London-wide measure would have greater benefit than having a targeted measure in terms of the total improvement to health. The amount of emissions would be greater if you include more people across the whole of London. It is a point that Simon [Cousins] just made.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Sure. Logically, if you targeted the world, you will get a bigger net impact than if you target one square inch! In terms of getting a result for the least amount of inconvenience to people, both the original study and my quick reading, clearly if you target it is effective as a mechanism to get a result. I am not talking about total quantum; I am talking about - I was going to say bang for buck but that gets one into money. I am talking about pollution reduction in return for scale of intervention. A targeted approach makes sense and I thought your study confirmed that.

Peter Wright (Policy Manager (Planning), TfL): We already have 75% of London covered by nitrogen dioxide air quality management areas. Boroughs have already taken it as a London-wide problem; not just a central London problem. The study concludes that the scale of impact of effecting and the knock on complications of trying to enforce something that would have standards from inside the M25 towards inner London and then another standard further on would be quite difficult to manage and enforce.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): That is getting into the implementation. I was hoping we could at least get some common ground but, by the sound of it, we have not got common ground that targeting is a good thing and it is then a question of how quickly and how costly. Sorry. Simon [Birkett], may want to comment on my analysis.

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): The focus here needs to be on cost effective measures, which is what you have said. I put up this picture which Committee Members have

got in front of them. This is a previous Kings College London thing looking at oxides of nitrogen as a transect across London. If you look at these blips in central London that is the problem. Pollution levels in central London relative to background levels and so on. I know the Mayor says a lot of this comes in from the continent. If you look at this the problems in central London are worse.

What you do not want to do, it seems to me, is have the tightest scheme at the M25 which addresses the inner London problems because, if you do that, the people at the Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium who are 1,000 people signing a petition worried about getting some clean air to their stadium in Wimbledon are going to be ramping this up a lot to address a largely central London problem. It needs to be targeted, it needs to be cost effective and, in the Olympic context, we need to look at the other things that we need to address which is this 30% reduction in traffic for 100 days next year.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Thank you. Firstly, can I ask Simon Birkett about the Berlin sticker scheme? You have cited this. TfL is saying, because the national framework is not in place, it just would not be possible in London. What is your take on that?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): I do not accept that for a moment. We have a huge public health issue. We have got a focus on next year. All we would need to do for next year is put signs up, let's say, at the south circular. That is what Clean Air in London has advocated. We would need to have stickers on cars. The Department of Transport can help the administration of that process. There should be something like a one point on your driving licence if you drove into that area. It would be a bit self-policing that way. That would be, as we say here, quick and easy to implement. That would be a German scheme.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): You do not believe the problems are insurmountable to get something up and running?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): No. Not given the scale of the public health issues we have to address and this additional issue about the Olympics.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Can I ask Peter [Wright], the costs of setting up and operating a Zone in the Congestion Charge Zone for 2013 is seen as low to medium according to your report. Can you quantify what that means? What figure are we talking about?

Peter Wright (Policy Manager (Planning), TfL): All of the Congestion Charging schemes are run by IBM so the scale of getting them to change the background system would be something we would have to negotiate. Off the top of my head I do not know what that figure would be, but it would be through negotiation with IBM.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): That would be through modifying an existing contract, rather than setting up a whole new infrastructure?

Peter Wright (Policy Manager (Planning), TfL): Yes.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): OK. In terms of timing then for the Zone, you do not believe it is practical to get something up and running for 2012. That is your analysis. When do you believe it could be implemented?

Peter Wright (Policy Manager (Planning), TfL): There are two different issues around the timing. One is around when you could consult and get a Mayoral decision on something that has had input from other people. There is the other around the time for compliance where you might get a legal challenge against the imposition of a new standard for vehicles.

On the first level, on consultation timescales, bearing in mind the Mayoral election in the middle, six to nine months would be the earliest in which you could even get a decision about implementing this - using either the road traffic regulation orders or using a road user charging type scheme. Secondly, the amount of time for pre-compliance, so to tell someone in advance how long it would be, it would be around a year before someone could challenge anything less than a year. That was the advice given previously.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): You are saying over 18 months. Even if a decision was made today you are saying you do not believe anything could be introduced sooner than in 18 months' time?

Peter Wright (Policy Manager (Planning), TfL): Yes.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Simon [Birkett], do you want to come back on that?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): When the Mayor looked at and dismissed the Berlin scheme in his Air Quality Strategy - so going back a year and further - it was because there might be issues about - as far as I could see - the so-called perceived credibility of the scheme. It might not have 99.9% compliance that you can achieve through cameras everywhere and stuff but actually the German scheme in 40 cities works very effectively. Getting the Government to put one point on your driving licence is a good self-policing thing.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): The aim is reducing pollution, rather than 100% compliance isn't it?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): It gets back to the points that Mike [Tuffrey] has made about cost effectiveness. What we want here are small inputs, such as cost, and the best possible outputs in terms of reduction in harmful air pollutants. The output here is not the compliance rate.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Given that the Mayor of London and the Government have conceded in terms of their negotiations with the European Commission that emergency measures would have to be considered and introduced as part of compliance with the EU regulations, surely this could be considered as an emergency measure and dealt with by both the Mayor and the Government in that way couldn't it?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): Looking over the next 18 months, yes, we do need these emergency measures for bad air days but we are facing chaos for 100 days next year - you can see the traffic chaos now. We are shutting down one lane on each side of one road - Upper Thames Street - for this Olympic Route Network. What we are actually looking at for that period - and I do separate it from the longer term issue - there is chaos. We either need an odd and even number plate ban or an inner Low Emission Zone. You cannot tell me that it is not more sensible to do something ordered and which tackles the most polluting vehicles in the most polluted part of London during that sort of challenge.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Final question. You could see that we could have a sticker based scheme that we introduce fairly swiftly and easily for the Olympics and then move on to a modification of the Congestion Charge Zone, using that technology, for a long term scheme post-Olympics?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): That is exactly right. Reading this TfL report it specifically says about the Berlin sticker scheme, "A manual solution of a sticker scheme could be quick and inexpensive to implement and the level of detection that could be achieved would be low with some reduced air quality benefits". It would be quick and easy to implement. If it was backed up by this one point on the driving licence supported by the Government we could do that. It must be a lot simpler to do that than wait a year and 18 months to do other things.

Peter Wright (Policy Manager (Planning), TfL): On that point, it is quick and easy to implement if there is a national framework in place. That is the point. I know that Simon [Birkett] is saying that it would be simple to introduce stickers on cars and add points to licences, but those all require some national agreement because people who visit London do not necessarily live in London. You would need to have the same enforcement in London. How would you check all those things? I know there is a point around trying to get the health benefits but, at the same time, you also need to have some way of managing this process and being able to enforce it as it happens.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): There are compliance issues in terms of the EU deadline and there are compliance issues in terms of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Olympics. The Mayor could work with the Government that this would be a compliance measure in the run up to the Olympics.

Andrew Boff (AM): What was the age expectancy figure that you gave us concerning air quality?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): I will try to be very precise about this. It is actually published on the Clean Air in London website and was done on Tuesday. 4,267 - the Mayor's estimate - of deaths attributable to long term exposure to dangerous airborne particles. Those people, on average, are losing 11.5 years each. That is a number which eliminates everything you can think of eliminating. 40 variables.

Andrew Boff (AM): That is a self-selecting statistic isn't it?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): No. If you eliminate 40 statistical variables; where the person is a smoker or a drinker, what their weight is, sex and so on. That is a pure number like for like. It is the proper way to describe it. The 4,300 relative to alcoholism, obesity, smoking. What COMEAP (Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants) said last December - which really is groundbreaking work - is that for air pollution, when you start adding in the real world so you are not isolating air pollution as the only cause of death, when you are adding in other things, what is actually happening is that they think a much more likely impact is that everyone in the UK who is dying from cardiovascular causes - which was 190,000 nationally and 15,800 in London in 2008 - are losing, on average, three years' additional of life attributable to long term --

Andrew Boff (AM): Forgive me but that is a self-selecting statistic because you are starting on the basis of people who have cardiovascular problems and then working back, rather than the general population. I just want to get the facts right here. You are not looking at the general population.

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): They are.

Andrew Boff (AM): That is a three year figure. You just said to me that this is a figure about people who died as a result of cardiovascular. That is not the general population. That is a self-selection.

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): No. The COMEAP report - and I would encourage you to look at what is on the side and so on is saying it is looking at the entire population, the 61 million population, of the UK. Looking at the entire population, it is saying that the most likely impact of air pollution is that the 191,000 who died of cardiovascular causes lost, in their case nationally, two years additional of life but, because pollution is worse in London, three years additional of life.

Andrew Boff (AM): The difference of one year?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): Yes, because air pollution in London is about 50% higher.

Andrew Boff (AM): Do you accept that any public policy needs to be taken in consideration of the economic effects of such a policy?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): Of course. What we need to be doing is coming up with the most cost effective way. Cost should not be treated in isolation. We need to be looking at the most cost effective way of tackling this public health crisis and achieving the legal compliance.

Andrew Boff (AM): Part of that consideration should be the disparity in life expectancy between the wealthy and the poor of eight years in London and we take that into consideration when we consider something that might damage the economy of London to the point where it might make people unemployed and, therefore, susceptible to other public health threats. That is something that we should feed in to the (inaudible) as well.

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): I am absolutely certain that it is important that inequalities are fed into the agenda. The Government's own statistic though is that non-white British are 17% more exposed to these dangerous airborne particles than white British and that Black British are some 30% more exposed to these particles on average than white British. That may well have other similarities.

Andrew Boff (AM): Is that not down to the tendency of ethnic minorities to live in urban areas? There are very few ethnic minority communities living in rural areas. It is an unusual thing.

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): All I can do is quote their number. I believe there is an inequality issue on the poverty also. What we would probably find is that, although TfL say that the poorest 20% of people have issues about access to vehicles, if you look at the poorest 10%, many of those people who are the greatest sufferers from inequality, may not even have access to a car, so they may be the ones who suffer most.

Andrew Boff (AM): They do have access to jobs. In your suggestion that we should have a temporary Clean Air Zone during the period of the Olympics, is that to address the problem of the Olympic Route Network?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): This is, ultimately, all about health. What Clean Air in London advocates is introducing this Clean Air Zone, frankly, now, or as soon as possible. What it is saying is that, to give people more time to adjust to this and to reduce the cost as far as possible, we can aim for a position late next year where we have a medium term scheme in place, but what we actually do for the 100 days before it - between the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Paralympic Games - is we have a much bigger clean air scheme in place to address not just to showcase the greenest Games ever but also to avoid the chaos of an odd and even number plate ban.

Andrew Boff (AM): Are you saying that, in isolation, even if we do not get the inner London Zone, we should have that anyway?

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): I would say that because we do have this task of trying to reduce background levels of traffic as Londoners by 30% for that 100 day period. If we are to work out how best to reduce that traffic it would be a great pity if we chose an odd and even number plate ban and announced it on 6 May next year - the first job of the new Mayor announcing an odd and even number plate ban because an inner Low Emission Zone, a Clean Air Zone, has not been put in place. That would be a great pity and that would be the wrong impression for London to create for the world.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Just to help me with this - it is probably known by everyone else - why do we need a national framework to introduce these measures if we already have enabling legislation in the Act that set up the GLA for Congestion Charging and Zones?

Peter Wright (Policy Manager (Planning), TfL): It is the method in which it is enforced. The national framework for a sticker enforcement scheme is very different from a national framework of number plate recognition, and then that going back to vehicles that are registered on a database. At the moment the sticker scheme that exists in Germany every vehicle has an emissions that is associated with it and that is put on a sticker that is agreed nationally and put onto their vehicles. We do not have such a thing for London, whereas we do have number plate recognition.

Nicky Gavron (AM): That is linked is it? Number plate recognition is linked to a vehicle licence and the vehicle licence tells you about the emissions? I am wondering whether we should not try to stick so closely to the Berlin idea but work out something that works with our enabling legislation.

Murad Qureshi (Chair): I am quite keen to write to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and see if there are ways and means of doing this. It does not sound to me that anyone has been in touch on that front. I am quite happy, as Chair of the Committee, to look into that because I think that may be half the solution, unless TfL has been down that road and not got very far.

We have had some useful pointers. We are not, like I said, going to have a vote. I want to sum up what I understand are these two reports. As we are all aware we only got them last night. My understanding of the City of London Corporation report is that it is telling us technically it can be dealt with and we can be in full compliance sooner than we realise if we were happy to pick up the tab. The TfL pseudo - if you do not mind me calling it that - cost benefit analysis suggests it is financially very onerous to vehicle owners of particular types of vehicles, and hence it should not be considered on that basis. That is my reading of it when I tried to read through the whole report. Unless I am told otherwise that is how I am going to leave this meeting thinking about the two reports we got last night.

Simon Birkett (Director, Campaign for Clean Air in London): I think that is a very good summary, Chair, but I would say that, in looking at this, all we are advocating here is putting in place in London something that has been in place in Germany since the beginning of last year, so two years after Germany.

I would encourage you, rather than to write to the DVLA, to write to the Department for Transport and urge it to help the Mayor to tackle this.

James Cleverly (AM): One final thing. Whilst I might not come to the same conclusions it is to reinforce one of the things that Mike [Tuffrey] was saying about splitting out the elements of this. One is the practical ability of us to bring a scheme into place in terms of the legislative framework, timescales, decision points etc. That is one set of arguments. The other set of arguments, which Andrew [Boff] highlighted, is the cost benefit analysis. One thing that was not really mentioned was the opportunity cost implications because there will both be costs to us at London government level and costs to individuals and businesses in London. If we are forcing money into the hands of the automotive industry - because a whole load of people are going to have to buy a whole load of new vehicles - then they are not spending it on something else, whatever that other thing might be.

What we need to be aware of is that this argument is split. Simon's [Birkett] position would be that it is doable and advantageous. Others might agree that it is doable but disagree with the advantageousness. It may be the case that we think it is neither advantageous or doable. Those two elements need to be understood separately and we need to come to our own conclusions about those separately.

I wanted to lay that down in terms of structuring our thinking around this.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): That appears as consensus on the Committee in exploring issues around the 'doability', even though we may draw our own conclusions about what direction we would go in. It seems there is a consensus for the Chair to write off various letters in terms of the doability of this.

James Cleverly (AM): I do not have any problem with this being explored at all. Knowledge is always useful. Certainly the period of time we have had this discussion has made it a much better and much more well informed debate than I would have been capable of having up until this point, so I welcome this and I welcome further investigation on it.

Murad Qureshi (Chair): Thank you very much, James, for that. I will pursue the Department for Transport and DVLA about replication of the scheme in Germany to here.

Andrew Boff (AM): Chair, if we end up with a temporary scheme just for the period of the Olympics it would look tokenistic and ridiculous.

Murad Qureshi (Chair): The Olympics is one of those events that helps you focus on something. My focus is the health of Londoners.

Andrew Boff (AM): I agree with you. We can argue about whether or not we have this but if all we do is end up with a thing that lasts 100 days and then disappears --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): When we talk about doability it is looking at both the short term plan for the 100 days, that Simon [Birkett] was talking about, and the medium term plan which was utilising the Congestion Charge Zone and those things. I do not think anyone in their right mind is just saying let's do something for the Olympics and then forget all about air pollution and move on to daffodils or whatever.

Murad Qureshi (Chair): Thanks also go to our expert witnesses for coming along at the tail end of a meeting and informing us a lot more on this particular issue for London. Thank you.