

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

[REDACTED]
(By email)

Our Ref: MGLA100918-2354

18 September 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request for information dated 8 September 2018, which the GLA received on 10 September 2018. Your request has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You requested:

I would like to request the following Environmental Information Regulations Request with regard to the letter written to the Mayor of London by the Transport Committee dated 7th August 2018.

In particular reference to the following paragraph: "TfL should work with partners to reduce river emissions. The PLA told the committee that river vessels tend to emit lower levels of Carbon and particulate matter compared to road transport."

Please can the Transport Committee provide the evidence that supports this sentence? Without post combustion mitigation on vessels, this statement is incorrect.

Please find attached the information we hold within the scope of your request. The Port of London Authority (PLA) informed the Transport Committee at their meeting on 16 May 2018. The transcript is [available on the GLA website](#). The relevant extract is on pages 7-8 and copied below:

Caroline Russell AM: Thank you. I want to have a look at the environmental impacts of these river services. In terms of carbon emissions, water transport is incredibly efficient. It has 17% of the carbon emissions of road transport and 50% of the carbon emissions of rail transport. However, if we look at the nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions, then there is possibly more of a question there. Because the Port of London Authority has done a draft Air Quality Strategy last December, would you like to say a bit about the situation with air pollution?

Robin Mortimer (Chief Executive, Port of London Authority): Sure. It is a really important issue. We published a draft Strategy and we are about to launch the final Strategy following the consultation. I have just a little bit of facts and figures on it. One of the things we did was to compare on the freight side a tonne of goods transported on the same journey whether by river or by heavy goods vehicle (HGV) and we modelled that for a number of different journeys. As

you say, on the carbon side, it is a clear winner because you are using tidal energy to transport the goods. On the particulate side, it is also much improved.

NOx is the real focus issue for us now. What the study showed was that at the point at which the emissions are emitted, on a like-for-like comparison basis, vessels produce more NOx than the equivalent HGV. However, if you then do the dispersion modelling, which TfL does and which the Department for Transport does, to look at the air quality impacts of those emissions, because the river is wide and the traffic tends to be in the middle of it, at the point you get to the receptors on the land side it is five to six times better from a NOx perspective. That is quite important story in a way but it is not straightforward to tell because it is certainly true that the regulations around engine standards on the vessels are less strict than on the equivalent HGVs. However, from an overall air quality point of view, we can safely say that the river is a better mode in all of those pollutants.

Having said all that, we are not saying that that means that there is no problem. At the moment, from a NOx perspective, the river accounts for around 1% of London's total emissions. If nothing else happens, if no other action is taken, that 1% will increase to 2% simply because there is a lot tighter regulation around the Low Emission Zone, etc, on the road network and because of growth in river traffic. We will become an increasing part of the issue.

What the Strategy basically says is that we need to get a grip on this and the first thing we need to do is to establish what is technologically possible. As I say, there is a whole set of international - currently European - and domestic regulations around vessel engine standards. There is an option to put additional incentives in place to encourage the speedy take-up of those improved, more modern standards. That is one option which we are committed to looking at.

The second is things like abatement technologies, particularly selective catalytic reduction (SCR). Is it technically possible to fit that to vessel engines or do you have to change the engine, which can be prohibitively expensive? We are committed to doing a detailed study to look at that. As I have said to many colleagues in the GLA, what we need to do is to make sure we have that evidence in place before we decide on the best package of regulatory and incentive measures because, at the moment, there is not the evidence.

The PLA's Air Quality Strategy is and emissions inventory are available at <https://www.pla.co.uk/environment/Air-Quality-and-Green-Tariff/Air-Quality>

If you have any further questions relating to this matter, please contact me, quoting the reference MGLA100918-2354.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Phillips
Information Governance Officer

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