

MAYOR OF LONDON

Caroline Russell AM

C/o davena.toyinbo@london.gov.uk

Our ref: MGLA280621-6897

Date: 10 November 2021

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for the petition presented to the London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting on 4 March about Transport for London (TfL) trackside land, which was received by my office on 28 June. I am sorry for the delay in responding.

Immediately stop the excessive removal of vegetation from trackside TfL embankments.

TfL appreciates and understands concerns regarding this work and would like to offer assurances that it does not carry out such work unless it is absolutely necessary for the safe running of the railway. TfL takes its responsibilities as a good neighbour very seriously and does not remove vegetation or trees for any reason other than to remove a potential risk to the safe running of the railway or bordering land, as illustrated in the images below.



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TfL's approach to the design and ongoing management of landscape and vegetation strives to ensure as far as reasonably practicable that:

- a clear line of sight is maintained to signals
- leaf fall onto the track is minimised
- the risk of tree fall is minimised
- non-native and invasive species, including vegetation pests and diseases, are prevented
- the resilience of the track environment is enhanced during periods of adverse weather

Furthermore, railway standards require that a strip of land adjacent to the fence is kept clear of dense vegetation, both at ground level and above. This strip is cleared for the following reasons:

- inspection of boundary fences, for condition and trespass
- maintenance of boundary fencing and gates
- access/egress to track, trackside land and railway infrastructure
- emergency escape routes should there be an incident on the track or trains
- preventing the encroachment of third-party structures/property

Ensure that TfL carries out biodiversity surveys before trackside work begins and that these are made easily accessible to the public.

TfL is committed to protecting and enhancing biodiversity where possible. Between 2016 and 2019, 3,000 bird boxes were installed on the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines, in addition to owl boxes, bat boxes and insect and bee 'hotels'. TfL is also creating its own vegetation nursery, which will allow a tailored planting programme in areas where inspections have identified a lack of biodiversity. As part of TfL's efforts to protect birds, sites are assessed before and during works. If a nest is found, the work is stopped, and a buffer zone of vegetation is left in place. Work is then completed at a later date when any chicks have fledged.

Ensure that local residents are informed in good time before trackside work begins and given time to feedback questions and concerns to TfL.

Each trackside area is visited around four times a year for maintenance to take place, in addition to any ad hoc work that may be required to address safety issues. This maintenance work varies throughout the year, as the growth rate of vegetation changes. There are around 30,000 properties

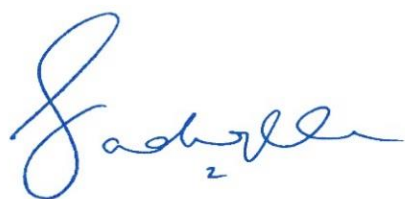
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neighbouring trackside areas under TfL management. You will appreciate that it would be very difficult to contact each one to inform them of vegetation works, particularly given the need to undertake works to address urgent safety issues. TfL does, however, contact neighbours via a letter drop if works that are scheduled to take three or more nights are within their locality.

Ensure that TfL contractors are trained in effective vegetation management and biodiversity preservation.

TfL's tree and vegetation inspection teams are specialist arborists and ecologists, who are qualified to undertake risk assessments.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small number '2' written below the name.

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London