

MAYOR OF LONDON

Jennette Arnold OBE AM
Chair of the London Assembly
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Dear Jennette,

Thank you for your letter of 13 September about the motions agreed at the London Assembly (Plenary) meeting on 5 September. I am sorry for the delay in replying. My response to each motion is set out below.

Motion 1 - Maximum Taxi Licence Age

I have been unwavering in my determination to take decisive action to tackle London's air quality crisis, and this involves cleaning up all vehicles on London's roads. While I welcome the efforts the taxi trade has already taken to reduce its emissions, from this year, taxis will be the largest source of road transport emissions in central London. I have been clear that everyone needs to play their part in reducing harmful air quality emissions, including the taxi trade.

The decision to reduce the maximum age of the most polluting licensed taxis to 12 years by 2022 was taken by Transport for London (TfL), as the licensing authority, following a 10-week consultation that attracted more than 5,000 responses. After considering and modelling the air quality impacts of a range of options to address taxi emissions, TfL concluded that a phased reduction of the taxi age limit to 12 years by 2022 would be needed to deliver the reduction in taxi emissions required to achieve compliance by 2025. TfL took a proportionate, evidence-based approach and maintained the 15-year age limit for less polluting Euro 6 taxis and zero emission capable (ZEC) taxis.

My Taxi and Private Hire Action Plan set out how I would help deliver the greenest taxi fleet in the world, and since 1 January 2018, any new vehicle presenting for licensing for the first time has had to be ZEC. It would be a retrograde step to allow new diesel vehicles into the taxi fleet as suggested by the Assembly. Drivers with already licensed diesel taxis will be able to present for relicensing until they reach the relevant maximum age limit.

There are a number of options available for drivers affected by the reduction in the age limit for taxis, including the delicensing scheme, which was enhanced in January and which provides payments up to £10,000. Earlier this year, I provided an additional £24m to the fund, and TfL continues to provide grant funding towards a £7,500 discount off the purchase price of a new ZEC taxi. A new LPG conversion grant will also be available for taxi owners with Euro 5 vehicles; the grant will fund around half the cost of the conversion, and taxis converted under this scheme will retain a 15-year age limit. TfL is also considering a proposal from the LTDA, as they develop a Euro 5 retrofit solution. If an appropriate retrofit is developed, tested and approved in future that delivers the required Euro 6 emissions, TfL will consider how it can be incorporated into taxi age limit and licensing requirements.

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In May 2018, I launched an Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Taskforce to consider the issues and challenges associated with the installation of EV charge points, as well as assess how many points may be needed in the future. The EV Infrastructure Delivery Plan was published in June this year, reporting an underutilisation of the capital's existing charging infrastructure by some 10 per cent. TfL monitors usage levels of the charge points it has helped to install; to date, this monitoring suggests that even the most popular charge points are not yet fully utilised. TfL has committed to installing 300 rapid charge points by 2020 and are on track to do so with 207 charge points already installed, more than 70 of which are dedicated taxi only rapid charge points.

There are now over 2,400 ZEC taxis licensed in London and I am delighted that the first pure electric taxi, the Dynamo, has now been licensed by TfL. This is an important milestone in achieving my ambition to clean up air quality in the capital. London's iconic taxis are an important part of the capital's transport mix, and I am proud that our taxi trade is leading by example. I have made my support for the taxi trade and its place in London's transport network clear. But tackling air pollution remains a public health priority.

Motion 2 - Devolution of Train Franchises

I welcome the Assembly's continued support for greater devolution of suburban rail services. I believe that the transfer of control of London's suburban rail services from the Department for Transport (DfT) to TfL will improve reliability and service quality more generally. Where we have been able to invest in Tube and Overground services, we have achieved the outcomes we need for the success of my Transport Strategy. This is not the case in much of South London, which has the lowest active, efficient and sustainable mode share in London, at only 54 per cent.

The Assembly will recall that I submitted a compelling business case for the devolution of selected inner suburban rail services to the DfT in October 2016, and will know that the now Prime Minister championed the original 2016 "A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East" paper, which set out the intention to transfer South Eastern inner suburban services when the current franchise ends.

I am keen to work with the Secretary of State for Transport, and to agree bringing the benefits of London Overground to a much wider area. TfL stands ready to improve services for commuters, if responsibility is transferred alongside its funding.

Motion 3 - TfL Plans to fit Central Line trains with cameras by 2023

Sexual assault is totally unacceptable and has no place on our transport network or in our city. TfL and the police are doing everything they can to keep Londoners safe on our transport network. London Underground remains a safe, low crime network, with very few people ever witnessing or experiencing crime.

TfL is taking action to introduce CCTV on the Central line as soon as possible, and on-train CCTV will start to be rolled out on some trains as early as next year. This forms just part of the Central Line Improvement Programme (CLIP), a major improvement programme to make all 85 Central line trains safer, more reliable and more accessible. As well as the introduction of CCTV, CLIP will improve the performance of trains by replacing their motors, electrical and mechanical parts. Due to the scale of the work involved, TfL will be removing two trains at a time from passenger service, maintaining a regular and reliable service while these improvements are carried out.

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On-train CCTV is important but is only one of many tools that the police have to investigate sexual offences. This includes station CCTV (there are 12,000 cameras across the Tube network), Oyster card data and witness statements as well as action by police and community support officers, of which there are around 3,000 on the transport network. The Central line is a priority for the British Transport Police (BTP), with regular plain clothes and uniformed officer patrols – and specialist operations – taking place to target the areas with the highest volume of reports.

Project Guardian is an ongoing partnership commitment, which involves a programme of activity including: enhanced policing, investigation and victim support, communications including the 'Report it to stop it' campaign' research, and staff and officer training to eradicate unwanted sexual behaviour from London's public transport network. Project Guardian has been successful in its efforts to raise public awareness of this issue and in improving victim confidence to report. It has led to the number of reports to police doubling to more than 2,000 since it was launched in 2013. The latest campaign evaluation research shows that women's intention to report an incident of unwanted sexual behaviour is now at 80 per cent. TfL is currently reviewing how to take forward this successful campaign. TfL will make a decision on next year's campaigns and initiatives as part of its priority and budget-setting process for 2019/20, which is currently underway.

TfL publishes information on its website about London Underground CCTV data and advises that CCTV is usually held for 14 days. As CCTV technology continues to improve, I have asked TfL to look for opportunities to lengthen current retention periods, in accordance with data protection legislation and the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice.

Motion 4 - Prime Minister's evidence of impact to London of No-Deal Brexit

Last year, I published an independent study showing a no deal Brexit could lead to a lost decade – or even longer – of significantly lower growth for the country.

I tasked GLA Economics with reviewing more recent evidence and they reported their findings on 29 October, which have been publicised and included in the GLA's regular reporting on Brexit readiness issues to central Government.

On 3 October, I met with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove, to discuss my grave concerns about the Government's preparedness for a no-deal Brexit. I also previously wrote to the Prime Minister (while he was a candidate for Conservative leader), as well as London MPs, to highlight my opposition to a no-deal Brexit.

Motion 5 - Recruitment of Police Officers

I would like to thank the Assembly for their support in calling for the Government to give London its fair share of the additional officers it has announced. The Government has finally woken up to the damaging impact of its cuts to policing.

I will continue to make the case to Government; and in fact I agree with the Commissioner that London needs 6,000 of these new officers. It is not yet clear what proportion of the £750m will be received by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), how this value will meet additional pressures facing forces such as pay and price inflation, or how the increase in officers will be sustained in future years. Aside from officer salaries, as the Assembly have acknowledged, there will be additional costs in the form of IT, fleet, equipment, estate and operational support staff.

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Motion 6 - Key worker housing in London

I believe sales of affordable housing should be avoided wherever possible. Where they take place, they should be kept to a minimum, and any proceeds should be reinvested in new affordable homes.

My team has contacted Peabody about the Crown Estate properties in Victoria Park, and understand that properties are only sold when they become vacant and it is clear that it would not be cost-effective to bring them up to the appropriate rental standard. However, funds raised from sales are invested in maintenance of other stock and building of new homes. In addition, Peabody has a commitment to sell no more than one in 10 empty homes over a three-year period and provide the local borough with a first option of purchasing any properties that it sells.

More broadly, I understand how important it is that all Londoners, including key workers, have access to decent and secure homes that they can afford. My team will be undertaking a public consultation on intermediate housing later in the year, which will seek views on a range of issues, including how we can ensure that key workers benefit from intermediate housing in the capital.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London