

► Air Quality

► Cleaning up London's air pollution consultation 3a London Councils Response

London Councils represents London's 32 borough councils and the City of London. It is a cross-party organisation that works on behalf of all of its member authorities regardless of political persuasion.

Please find London Councils' comments on a number of the questions and issues posed in the online survey. Please note that a number of the boroughs will also submit their own individual responses.

Introduction

Nearly 9,500 people die each year in London due to long-term exposure to air pollution¹. It is urgent that this issue is addressed, and will require ambitious action. According to public polling conducted by London Councils, 76% of London residents believe tackling air pollution should be a priority. London Councils supports the publicity and importance the Mayor has given to this issue. But it is also essential that further education and awareness campaigns are run to ensure the seriousness of poor air quality is recognised by all Londoners, and to gain further support from the public for ambitious measures to tackle this. London should aim to be an exemplar in dealing with air pollution, and this will require a convincing narrative on how any proposals would work on a practical level.

It is crucial that a long-term roadmap is developed showing how we will improve air quality in London well beyond the implementation of the ULEZ. London should aim for the safe levels of air pollution as set by the EU as a minimum, but have a long term view to reaching the levels set out by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which are more stringent for Particulate Matter (PM). Additionally, in geographical terms we should aim for the whole of London to meet these levels at all times with the area around Heathrow being a significant outer London location with notably poor air quality.

Proposal 1

Early introduction (April 2017)

London Councils supported the Mayor's previous proposals to bring forward the implementation of the ULEZ by one year from September 2020 to September 2019. In principle London Councils supports the earlier introduction of the ULEZ in April 2019 given the seriousness of the air quality issue and the positive impact this would have (as seen in the Integrated Impact Assessment [IIA]). However, we do have concerns about impacts on SMEs in particular and those organisations that have proactively put measures in place to change their fleets in time for the September 2019 introduction. We also have concerns about vehicles belonging to the emergency services. We would therefore like TfL to consider these individual cases and agree a payment structure or exemption in certain circumstances, such as those outlined, between April 2019 and September 2019. This is to reduce the potentially significant cost impact on those organisations that have proactively made procurement decisions for a previously announced timescale.

The Mayor needs to be able to show that the benefits of introducing the scheme five months earlier than previously proposed (and 17 months earlier than was originally planned under the previous Mayor) outweigh the

¹ King's College London (2015) Understanding the health impacts of air pollution in London

negative costs. Additionally, London Councils requires clarification how the Mayor will deal with the fact that, potentially, the national retrofit certification scheme (proposed in Defra's air quality plan) is not implemented by 8 April 2019. If this is delayed, there would be no indication regarding how retrofitted vehicles will be certified and show compliance to enter the ULEZ without paying a daily charge. This again would be unfair to those motorists who are trying to do the right thing by making their vehicles less polluting.

Sunset period

In our response to the previous stage of this consultation, London Councils stated that the combined sunset period for the Emissions Surcharge and then the ULEZ, was too long. Bringing the ULEZ forward in part deals with this as it would reduce the period the Emission Surcharge is in place from three years to nineteen months. This is a more favourable situation than the one proposed in the previous consultation (stage 2) as the period in which the ULEZ is fully enforceable is brought forward.

Our previous response also stated that the discount levels for the Emission Surcharge and ULEZ sunset periods were too lenient. With a discount level of 90% across the whole period (at this moment understood to be September 2017 – April 2022) residents would only be liable to pay £1 a day for that period, and we believe that this will not provide a big enough disincentive. We re-iterate our belief that the discount should be on a sliding scale over the four and a half years, increasing towards the end of the sunset period.

London Councils agree with the longer sunset period for disabled tax class vehicles as we recognise that the average price for new Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV), and other adapted vehicles are higher than for a 'traditional' car.

Additionally, the sunset periods need to be co-ordinated with future expansion plans in mind, and consistency needs to be applied to any final proposals. London Councils feels that any plans for exemptions and sunset periods should be developed with greater input from the central boroughs concerned.

Exemptions

We previously stated in our response to phase 2 of the Mayor's consultation on air quality that we saw little benefit in exempting certain types of vehicles from the Emissions Surcharge and ULEZ payment. Whilst acknowledging that many of the vehicle types mentioned in the consultation documents cannot be altered or upgraded to improve their environmental performance due to their nature, we want to re-state the belief that it is counterintuitive to the aims of the scheme, and the Mayor's wider plans to improve air quality in London, to exempt them from the Emissions Surcharge and ULEZ charge. The consultation document states that there are currently no proposals to change these existing approved discounts and exemptions, but we believe that this needs to be addressed. It would be better to include them as standard, and then have a system where they can apply for temporary exemptions based on a time-period, therefore allowing them to meet certain obligations, such as involvement in parades, classic car shows, and fairgrounds etc., but disincentives people who own very old vehicles to drive in London outside of these periods. London Councils also opposes the exemption and/or 100% discount for the following vehicle types: two-wheeled motorbikes (and sidecars) and mopeds, specialist off-road vehicles, e.g. tractors and mobile cranes, commercial vehicles constructed before 1973, Ministry of Defence vehicles, accredited breakdown vehicles, roadside recovery vehicles, and private hire vehicles. London Councils supports including L-Category vehicles and 9+ seater vehicles in the Emissions Surcharge.

Buses

We support the earlier upgrade of the TfL buses operating within the ULEZ although it is important to highlight that this must not negatively impact on the TfL bus fleet upgrade on hotspot areas outside the ULEZ. Buses should be upgraded as and when possible across the whole of London, to ensure that localised areas in outer London also get the support they need.

Proposal 2

Strengthening ULEZ emissions standards

London Councils strongly supports the inclusion of PM in the ULEZ standards to bring it into line with national plans for a Clean Air Zone Framework and the national plans for a Euro VI retrofit certification scheme. Although Euro 6 diesel cars and Euro VI HGVs include limits on PM anyway, this also ensures that retro-fitted vehicles not only address NO₂ but also contribute towards ensuring that London remains below the legal levels for PM in the future as well. This move essentially closes a potential gap in regulation on retrofitting vehicles, which is

welcomed. Particulate matter has a significant impact on health, it is considered that there is no safe limit so all opportunities should be taken to reduce levels in ambient air.

Minor Adverse Impacts

The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) for the proposals does highlight that a few groups within society would face disproportionate minor adverse impacts for two key objectives, during the period in question (from April 2019 – September 2019).

The proposals show a minor negative impact on certain groups for the objective 'Maximising accessibility for all in and around London and enable sustainable transport choice'. The groups affected include: BAME retail and wholesale industry businesses using vans in central London; school children from low income families due to increased cost of school trips by coach; groups reliant on charitable or voluntary services (e.g. disabled, older people, faith groups).

The IIA also shows 'Minor adverse impacts' on the London economy in the first year of operation, particularly the following sectors: retail; construction; accommodation/catering; night-time economy; coach; and tourism. A disproportionate impact could be seen by commuter coaches, tourist coaches and sightseeing bus operators entering London; tradespeople and market traders.

Despite this, the IIA does state that "*All socio-economic groups will benefit from reductions in NO₂ exposure levels with the greatest absolute and percentage reductions experienced by the most deprived communities. There is a reduction in the number of care homes, schools and hospitals in areas of exceedance in 2019 compared with the original ULEZ proposal. This will disproportionately benefit children, older people, pregnant women and the disabled*".

Given the main aims of the ULEZ are to improve air quality, this is welcomed. However, the Mayor should look to work with boroughs to identify some of the groups who might face a minor adverse impact due to the early introduction of the ULEZ, and look to provide some form of mitigation support to help insulate them from these impacts.

Euro standards

We feel it necessary to re-iterate our belief that the use of the Euro standards for modelling and as a basis for the proposals is a concern, given the understanding that many vehicles do not perform in real world conditions as well as advertised under their Euro standard. Given that Euro 6c standard vehicles will be the first ones to face real-world driving tests and will not be introduced until 2017 is a worry. And even this more stringent standard will use a 110 per cent "conformity factor" limit (which is the difference between the laboratory test and real-world conditions) until 2021. This shows that using the Euro standard is not enough to improve the air quality to the level necessary. The Mayor should not be content with aiming for a lower type of air pollution but instead be looking to encourage use of alternative, clean fuel powered vehicles and also modal shift to more active and sustainable travel modes, such as walking and cycling. This could be done by improving the electrical vehicle charging infrastructure in London, and also working with boroughs and the private sector to develop clean LGVs and HGVs (such as hydrogen and LPG), and continue to improve public transport provision, and walking and cycling infrastructure.

Emissions Surcharge / ULEZ revenue

London Councils requests that any revenue raised as a result of these schemes (Emissions Surcharge and ULEZ) above the operating costs, should be ring-fenced exclusively for investment in air quality improvement or active and sustainable travel projects.

Modelling

The consultation information documents show that by total amount of air pollutant emissions, there is approx. 20 times as much NO_x emitted in greater London (GLA administrative boundary) as in central London (Congestion Charge Zone). This shows that there is a need for continued action on air pollution across the whole of London, to ensure that all Londoners are able to benefit from good air quality. London Councils believes the Mayor should continue to develop his air quality plans beyond the implementation of the central London ULEZ, by continuing to clean up the bus, taxi and PHV fleets in London, whilst also implementing policies that will mitigate and reverse the impacts of poor air quality in local areas in outer London. This could be done through the installation of increased green infrastructure (which provides wider benefits to society other than just improving air quality),

encouraging modal shift through continuing to implement increased cycling infrastructure across London, reducing the number of cars on the roads by enabling Londoners to choose alternative options such as public transport.

We also welcome TfL's commitment to undertaking and sharing full demand modelling prior to the consultation on ULEZ expansion later this year, but believe that the boroughs should be closely involved in this work, given their understanding of the issues and challenges in their local areas.

We believe it is important that the Mayor provides more information of his long term plans for improving air quality in London, beyond the implementation of the ULEZ between now and the next phase of consultation planned for the autumn. It is important for local residents and businesses to have long-term policy clarity in order to ensure they can make the necessary changes with the smallest amount of burden.

London Councils would like to re-iterate its support for the introduction of a targeted diesel scrappage scheme, to remove the dirtiest vehicles from London's roads to help the least well off with the additional financial burden of upgrading their vehicles.