

Leader of the Council
Councillor Andreas Kirsch

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To the
Mayor of London Sadiq Khan
City Hall
Kamal Chunchie Way
London
E16 1ZE

Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, 20 January 2023

Dear Sadiq Khan,

given the urgency of tackling the threat of air pollution, Kingston Council supports the proposals for expansion of the ULEZ to cover Greater London *in principle*. Our administration is committed to improve air quality and to encourage sustainable and active travel. In the last couple of years, we have successfully introduced many school streets and we are expanding these further. We have committed to renewing our fleet of bin lorries with electrical lorries, making us the first borough in London with a 100% EV bin fleet. We also have expanded our network of electrical charging points and are continuing the expansion. We have so far been engaging positively with Transport for London, actively seeking a dialogue, but I would urge you to allow more time for the implementation of the ULEZ in the outer London boroughs to allow for mitigation measures to be put into place.

The outlined expansion plans do not take into account the issues our residents and businesses are facing, given that Kingston is an outer London borough. What we in Kingston and in other outer London boroughs need is a real commitment to improving our public transport

and active travel networks, such as cycle lanes. Outer London boroughs need more investment in public transport and more commitment to these alternative travel networks. The outer London boroughs already are at risk of falling behind – as public transport is focused on Central London. The ULEZ expansion will widen that gap.

Kingston's PTAL (Public transport accessibility level) rating demonstrates the issues residents and businesses as well as visitors to our borough are facing. The majority of areas of Kingston have very low PTAL ratings (1a, 1b and 2). Chessington and Malden Rushett, vast parts of New Malden and Old Malden, Tolworth as well as North Kingston and Coombe are the least connected parts of the borough. This means that neither the frequency nor accessibility of public transport would permit people to rely less on their cars. A journey to a hospital or other medical service can take minutes by car and more than an hour on a bus if you live in one of those areas. In fact, only Kingston Town Centre, Norbiton and some parts of Surbiton and New Malden have PTAL ratings of 4-6. Travelling by public transport from some areas of Kingston to others is challenging, not to mention the lack of public transport links to neighbouring boroughs. The low PTAL rating also impacts on how people come to Kingston to visit our borough for shopping or leisure. Due to the poor connectedness of Kingston, many of our retail and hospitality businesses are concerned of the impact the ULEZ will have on them.

As a result of our low PTAL ratings, many of our residents and businesses are heavily reliant on their cars, however, without addressing access to and availability of public transport, it will be difficult for us to improve the air quality by encouraging more people to use public transport instead of their cars. In the last couple of years, together with TfL, we have sought to expand our cycle lane network, but many parts of the borough remain unconnected and more work could be done. Without more investment in public transport and active travel networks, as well as a public understanding of the different situation of outer London boroughs and the impact of the ULEZ expansion will have on our residents and businesses, many will find it impossible to see any kind of positive impact on our air quality that the expansion of ULEZ claims to bring. Due to the lack of infrastructure, it will be business as usual – with people paying the daily fee.

And this does not take into account that Kingston is also home to many self-employed residents and micro-businesses who rely on their car or van for their livelihoods. Particularly in a cost-of-living crisis, when people are already finding it difficult to make ends meet, everything should be done to prevent them from having to worry even more about their livelihood. The scrappage scheme that has been proposed does therefore not go far enough to

help the different economies of an outer London borough. In addition to a commitment to invest in our public transport and active travel network, I would also urge you to expand scrappage scheme and the grace period.

To make ULEZ a success, residents and businesses need to see their issues and concerns are being listened to. I would like to invite you to come to Kingston, with the aim for us to travel around the borough using public transport. During this time, I will be able to highlight and discuss the issues residents in our borough are facing in regarding to the planned ULEZ expansion and you can experience our difficulties first hand.

As a Liberal Democrat administration, we support any initiatives that aim to improve air quality for current and future generations. But these should be sensitive to the impact they may have on people's daily lives and mitigation measures should be put in place before the expansion. In our current difficult economic situation, residents and business need more time to exchange their vehicles, giving the cost-of-living crisis. Rushing to expand the ULEZ could leave some of our residents and businesses struggling to cope even.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andreas Kirsch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Cllr Andreas Kirsch
Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group
Leader of the Council
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames