

Sent via email to
cleanairyourview@tfl.gov.uk

28 July 2022

Heathrow Strategic Planning Group response to Transport for London consultation on expanding ULEZ to the whole of London, and Road User Charging.

This response is made by the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group (HSPG), a constituted grouping of 'willing' local authorities and local enterprise partnerships¹ committed to jointly leading a collaborative multi-agency approach on the future planning of the functional economic area surrounding Heathrow Airport. The area correlates well with the Heathrow travel to work area.

The Group was formed in late 2015. It is independent of, but constructively engages with, Heathrow Airport Ltd (HAL). The Group collaborates on interventions that could improve the area around the airport and acts as a conduit between the members and Heathrow Airport Limited, Government, neighbouring area interests (including the West London Alliance of London Boroughs), and other key stakeholders.

The geographic context of the Partnership means it is particularly well placed to respond to this specific consultation, given our engagement with authorities on both sides of the proposed new ULEZ boundary. This response has been compiled with input from officers from across the partnership, particularly members of our Surface Access Group. The response is therefore made on behalf of the partnership, picking out the key issues we see as impacting on the Heathrow sub-region, with a specific focus on access to the airport for residents working there. We note that many of our members are also issuing their own responses based on their own specific circumstances, the detail of which may vary from this aggregate response.

HSPG have also specifically discussed our response to this consultation with the Heathrow Area Transport Forum (HATF), and we echo many of the points made in their own submission.

Key feedback points:

- The majority of HSPG members support the principle of ULEZ as a proven tool for improving air quality.
- HSPG call for a firm commitment that the proportion of revenue raised from an extended ULEZ would be hypothecated to support the improvement of public transport and active travel options in outer London and outside of London.
- HSPG calls for a review of the premium applied to travel to Heathrow airport, at a minimum for employees working at the airport campus, to be dropped as part of the package of measures associated with the expansion of the zone.
- HSPG call for further work to be undertaken on analysing the impacts of the proposal on low-income groups and those with protected characteristics. A firm proposal for mitigating these impacts should then be drawn up with a clear funding commitment made. This should then be consulted on as a complete package.
- HSPG call for eligibility of the scrappage scheme to be extended to cover residents living in areas adjacent to the airport, with eligibility extending to cover the geography of around ten miles around the proposed boundary to show equivalence with the approach taken for the inner London ULEZ extension. The exact eligibility area should be determined on the basis of

a more detailed analysis of impact, and in discussion with relevant local authorities and other stakeholders such as Heathrow.

- HSPG calls for further place-based research to be undertaken on the impacts of the scheme on specific geographies within the proposed expanded zone, and particularly the Heathrow functional economic area as a sector that has been identified in TfL's own impact assessment as being specifically negatively impacted by the proposal.
- HSPG call for further consideration to be given on how to ensure compliance rates in outer London and the authority areas adjacent to the capital are broadly comparable to those that existed in inner London before the last expansion to the inner-ring road went live. This may include further up-front mitigation to support taking non-compliant vehicles off the road (particularly where they are owned by low-income households), grace periods or potentially a delay to scheme commencement.
- HSPG call for a smart scrappage scheme to be introduced that uses the 'trigger point' of ULEZ expansion to incentivise to the greatest possible extent a move towards active and sustainable modes.
- HSPG call for any future road user charging scheme to primarily seek to tackle congestion and improve the productivity of the UK economy, of which the Heathrow sub-region forms an important constituent part. Such a scheme must strive to be progressive and not price low-income road users off the road.

Detailed comments

For ease, we have grouped our responses to the two key issues you are requesting feedback on. We have no substantive comment to make on your proposals for the removal of the Auto Pay fee, or revision of PCN levels.

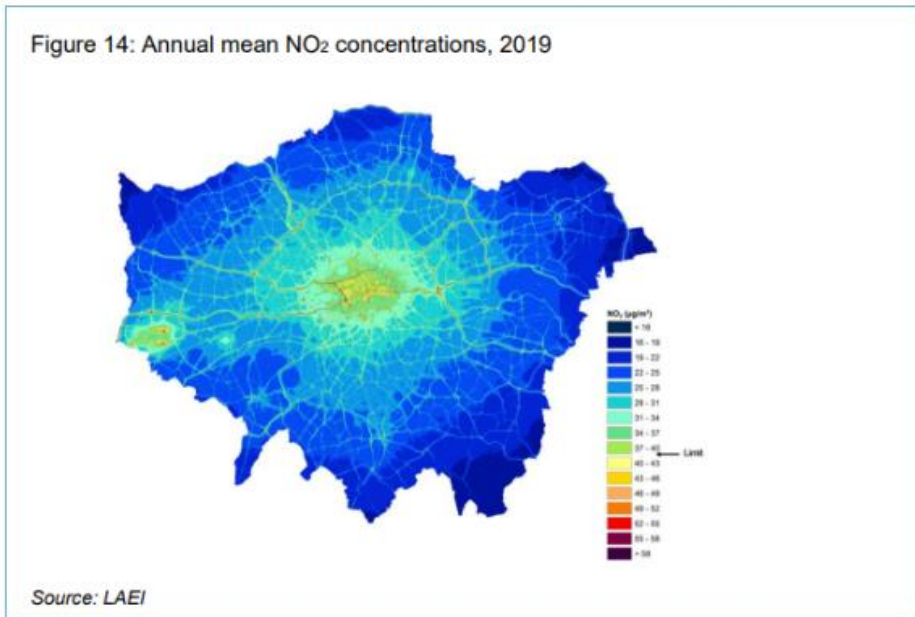
➤ **ULEZ expansion**

Principle of the scheme

The majority of HSPG members support the principle of ULEZ as a proven tool for improving air quality.

We note the information in the consultation (Figure 14, below) around the ongoing levels of exceedance outside of central London, and particularly around Heathrow airport, and agree this requires addressing.

HSPG was supportive of the 'Heathrow Ultra Low emission Zone' (HULEZ) when it was proposed as part of the expansion conversation and so it is positive to see action being taken by Transport for London (TfL), given that the Heathrow expansion scheme is currently paused.

Figure 14: Annual mean NO₂ concentrations, 2019

Provision of viable alternatives

Whilst accepting there is evidence the existing ULEZ scheme has been successful at improving air quality in inner London, there is concern that public transport access within and into outer London (including areas at the margins of or beyond TfL services) for many is clearly vastly inferior compared to the area covered by the current zone. Journey distances also tend to be longer and there is severance created by large physical barriers formed by radial and orbital strategic roads, rail and airport and estate security perimeters that all make active travel less attractive and feasible. The alternatives are therefore simply not there for many at the current time and the consultation offers very little assurance that they will be developed in future years – indeed under current proposals for ‘managed decline’ in response to the current financial issues at TfL, public transport provision may actually worsen – with bus mileage potentially dropping by up to 18%.

Employment in the area is also heavily weighted to the airport, freight logistics and service operations that operate 24/7 and require extensive night time and shift working – into hours typically less well served by public transport.

The introduction of a Heathrow premium on some public transport fares, applied indiscriminately to employees and passengers, is a particularly difficult approach to square with the policy of an extended ULEZ. If the intent is to seek to move people out of cars, then public transport should be made as affordable and attractive as possible, and applying this premium is a major disincentive which actually pulls users in exactly the opposite direction.

We are particularly concerned that there is no commitment to spend the additional funding gained through an expanded ULEZ specifically in improving sustainable transport options in outer and out-of London authorities. Indeed, the framing of the proposal in the paper to the TfL board in March 2022 as part of a general revenue-raising package of measures to support TfL’s transition to ‘financial sustainability’ is particularly unfortunate.

HSPG, therefore, call for a firm commitment that the proportion of revenue raised from an extended ULEZ would be hypothecated to support the improvement of public transport and active travel options in outer London and outside of London.

HSPG calls for a review of the premium applied to travel to Heathrow airport, at a minimum for local residents and employees working at the airport campus, to be dropped as part of the package of measures associated with the expansion of the zone.

Equalities impacts

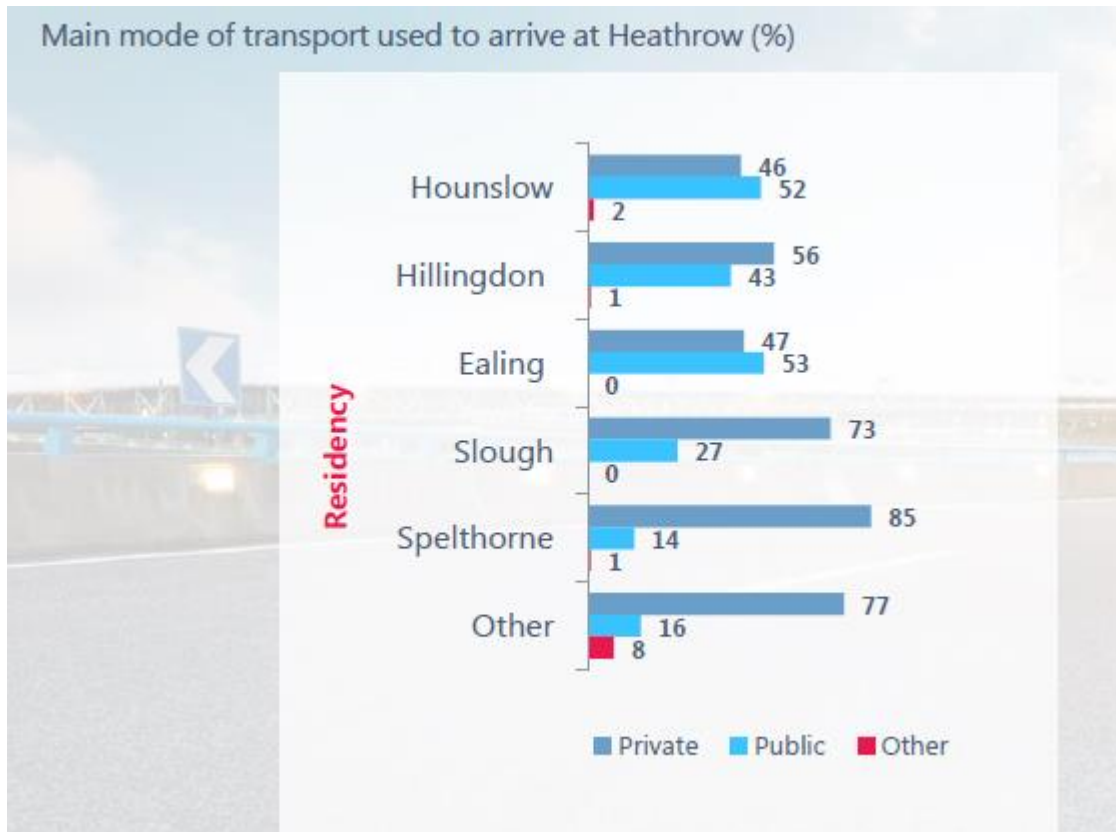
There is also concern at the extent to which the policy disproportionately affects low-income households; people with protected characteristics under The Equalities Act 2010 living in the sub-region and businesses. Preliminary data released from the 2021 census indicate that the population of outer London boroughs and adjacent areas are growing faster than that in inner London boroughs and the South East region or the UK as a whole, so it is likely the number of people impacted by this proposal may be higher than the outputs from modelling using older data.

The lack of analysis in the consultation material as to who owns vehicles that are non-compliant at present, and whether they have protected characteristics is disappointing. However, it would seem plausible that the oldest cars are likely to be held by poorer members of society, who as a group may also be more likely to have other protected characteristics. Whilst accepting that such groups also may disproportionately bear the negative consequences of poor air quality, the direct welfare impacts of potentially losing (or otherwise having constrained) car-based accessibility options without practical and affordable alternatives will be significant. There is no assessment in the consultation package of these effects. The disproportionate impact on such groups makes the intervention problematic without appropriate mitigation. We, therefore, find it difficult to offer a view on the proposal without assurances on the scale and nature of the mitigation available, when it would come into effect and specifically the size, scope, and eligibility for the scrappage scheme.

We are particularly concerned about the suggestion that low-income households and those impacted with protected characteristics who live outside of the GLA boundary may be excluded from a scrappage scheme. This is simply not acceptable given the potential impact of the proposals outside of London.

We also note this is a divergence from the previous arrangement put in place to mitigate the impact of the inner London ULEZ extension, where all residents in the GLA area could apply for the scheme, some of who would live ten miles or more from the boundary.

This unfairness is compounded by the fact that, for many of those living outside of the GLA boundary but travelling into Outer London, the alternatives to a private car are often very limited and/or impractical. This is shown in results from Heathrow's own employee survey (2017), which illustrates the dependence those living outside of London have on private cars to access opportunities at the airport.



Properly defining the mitigation will also allow for more detailed modelling on impact. Currently, the impact figures in terms of air quality improvements, congestion, and carbon do not include any behaviour change achieved through the scrappage scheme. This may be underestimating the benefits of the full proposal.

HSPG call for further work to be undertaken on analysing the impacts of the proposal on low-income groups and those with protected characteristics. A firm proposal for mitigating these impacts should then be drawn up with a clear funding commitment made. This should then be consulted on as a complete package.

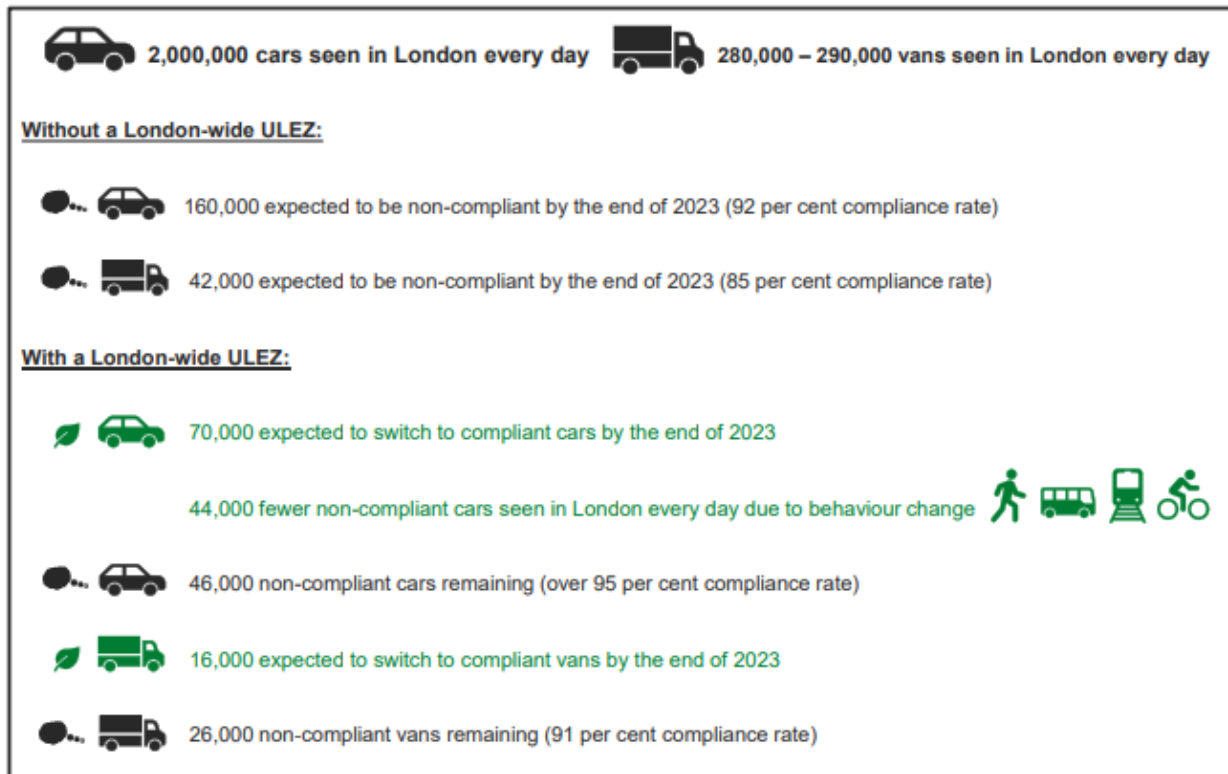
HSPG call for eligibility of the scrappage scheme to be extended to cover residents living in areas adjacent to the airport, with eligibility extending to cover the geography of around ten miles around the proposed boundary to show equivalence with the approach taken for the inner London ULEZ extension. The exact eligibility area should be determined on the basis of a more detailed analysis of impact, and in discussion with relevant local authorities and other stakeholders.

Concerns on Compliancy Forecasts in Impact Assessment

Data from Heathrow suggests that the proportion of vehicles that are non-compliant may be significantly higher than that modelled by TfL.

TfL estimates that 92% of cars and 85% of vans will be compliant in 2023, as set out in Figure 20 below.

Figure 20 Scheme impacts on London-wide daily unique vehicles



Based on detailed ANPR-based survey data from Heathrow from 2019, some 81% of cars were currently compliant, plus 59% of vans.

Given the extreme economic shock faced by the sub-region in the last two years, it seems unlikely that there has been significant updating of the fleet in the intervening period and therefore compliance rates will not have moved significantly on from this level.

We understand that the data associated with the last ULEZ expansion showed that the compliance of cars in the zone a year before the scheme went live was around 86% and vans around 76%.

Whilst we understand that there is evidence of a jump in compliance immediately before the commencement of a charge like ULEZ, there will almost certainly be a need for a particularly large jump from current baseline to prevent very significant impacts on large numbers of existing road users, and in particular for those using LGVs.

Our analysis suggests that levels of compliance in some geographies impacted by the proposed scheme, and perhaps particularly on the very edges of the zone where communities have not been exposed to the same publicity in relation to the existing ULEZ (and indeed have not been eligible for previous scrappage schemes if they live outside of GLA area) compliance rates may be lower than that being predicted by TfL.

This may have a particular impact on businesses that rely on LGVs, compliance rates for which appear far lower than the TfL forecast. It is not clear that this distributional economic impact has been properly taken into account in the impact assessments included as part of the consultation material.

There may therefore be a case to defer implementation for a further year to allow for additional time for road users to adapt to the policy. This would also be more in keeping (though still shorter) than

the time those impacted by the previous expansion to the inner ring road had to adapt. As the economy in the sub-region rebounds from the severe impact on the aviation sector in particular, the economic impact of moving to compliance may also be reduced. An alternative to this may be to provide a grace period for existing residents (a discounted fee for a year or more). This could be a general waiver applicable to all residents within and living adjacent to the zone (e.g., within the 10-mile buffer we proposed above) or at the very least covering those needing to access large employment areas on the boundary like Heathrow.

HSPG calls for further place-based research to be undertaken on the impacts of the scheme on specific geographies within the proposed expanded zone, and particularly the Heathrow functional economic area as a sector that has been identified in TfL's own impact assessment as being specifically negatively impacted by the proposal.

HSPG call for further consideration to be given on how to ensure compliance rates in outer London and the authority areas adjacent to the capital are broadly comparable to those that existed in inner London before the last expansion to the inner-ring road went live. This may include further up-front mitigation to support taking non-compliant vehicles of the road (particularly where they are owned by low-income households), grace periods or potentially a delay to scheme commencement.

Maximise opportunity for behaviour change from the scrappage scheme

We also believe that the scrappage scheme should be developed into a more sophisticated mechanism for delivering behaviour change. Under the terms of the scheme that was in place for the expansion of ULEZ to the inner ring road, an owner of a 2005 petrol car could (if eligible) use the public subsidy of £2000 to upgrade to a 2006 vehicle. The benefit of this shift to the individual and the wider community is negligible and yet the cost to the public purse is high. The scrappage scheme should be designed in such a way as to incentivise a shift to sustainable and active modes in the first. This could be achieved with a similar proposal to the Transport for West Midlands 'Mobility credits' scheme. Under this arrangement, those looking to take their car off the road and replace that with public transport would receive a higher payment than if they took the funding and reinvested it in a car.

HSPG call for a smart scrappage scheme to be introduced that uses the 'trigger point' of ULEZ expansion to incentivise to the greatest possible extent a move towards active and sustainable modes.

➤ Future of Road User Charging

HSPG welcomes TfL starting a debate around a more rationale use of road space in the capital. The authority should be applauded for starting this difficult discussion at a time when national action in this space is notably limited.

Clearly, the proposals are at a very early stage, and there is little detail to comment on at this point.

In terms of the very specific questions posed, HSPG would want to see a road user charge developed to primarily improve the efficiency of the road network and improve the productivity of the UK. We do not however discount the role such a system could play in incentivising a move towards cleaner vehicles and believe this is also a reasonable policy objective for the scheme to seek to address. In this way, such a charge to moving vehicles would be similar to that already routinely imposed by many different authorities on stationary vehicles through parking charges, which are primarily set to manage parking stock but often have an emissions differential applied.

Representing as we do an area that straddles the GLA boundary, we are primarily concerned at this stage that any boundary effects of a charge of properly considered - particularly where these may impact low-income and more vulnerable road users in an area with economic activity characteristics and travel choice rationale that is very different to that typical of inner central London areas, with many who have far fewer alternatives to using a private car. It cannot be an equitable outcome if the scheme simply prices poorer people off the highway - and therefore for some out of economic activity and community life. To this end, any scheme must be tailored to avoid being regressive and must include a step change in the provision of public transport provision.

HSPG call for any future road user charging scheme to primarily seek to tackle congestion and improve the productivity of the UK economy, of which the Heathrow sub-region forms an important constituent part. Such a scheme must strive to be progressive and not price low-income road users off the road.

We hope that these comments are a useful input into your decision-making processes and we look forward to discussing the initial findings from this consultation exercise with TfL officers at our next Surface Access Group meeting on 28 September.

Yours Faithfully,



Mark Frost, Associate Director Heathrow Strategic Planning Group
On Behalf of HSPG members

¹ Full Members of the HSPG (and signatories of an 'Accord') are: Elmbridge Borough Council, Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership, London Borough of Ealing, London Borough of Hounslow, Runnymede Borough Council, Slough Borough Council, Spelthorne Borough Council, Surrey County Council, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Other organisations have 'Observer' status and participate in some activities, including: Government, Highways England and West London Alliance (of London Boroughs), Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Group works closely with Heathrow and airport stakeholder groups such as Heathrow Community Engagement Board and Heathrow Area Transport Forum.