

ULEZ EXPANSION – CLEANER AIR AND CLIMATE PROTECTION

Friends of the Earth London Groups Network – February 2023

Ultra Low Emission Zone expansion to Outer London will be good for our health

The mayor has announced expansion of the ULEZ to the whole of Greater London starting in August 2023. This will bring cleaner air to 5 million more people according to the mayor. The existing ULEZ has reduced air pollution in Inner London, and so has reduced the level of illness it caused. Research by Imperial College shows that London's toxic air leads to 4,000 premature deaths in our city each year¹. Over half a million Londoners suffer from chronic asthma, and are more vulnerable to the impacts of toxic air². Most of these people live in outer London². The London boroughs with the highest estimated number of air pollution early deaths a year are Bromley (204), Barnet (201), Croydon (196) and Havering (178)³. It is estimated that the ULEZ expansion will take 44,000 of the most polluting cars off the road by the end of 2023⁴.

Every hospital admission caused by toxic air harms the person concerned and their family, but is also a big drain on our overstretched NHS. Research shows that air pollution is particularly harmful to children and can reduce the growth of their lungs by 5%, leading to chronic respiratory problems⁵. Clean air should be a human right, but for years now our government has failed to bring the UK within legal limits, let alone the World Health Organisation guidelines.

But won't it hit poorer people and small businesses?

Less than one in six Outer London cars will have to pay the ULEZ charge. Only the most polluting cars will be charged. The mayor is giving £110 million in scrappage grants to Londoners on low incomes, charities, and small businesses whose vehicles would have to pay the charge. This grant can enable the owner to buy a cleaner vehicle exempt from the charge, or to buy a bicycle or electric cargo bike and have a lot of money left over, or to receive a payment of higher total value including free public transport for two years. The mayor should also invite and assess applications for a scrappage grant and/or a one-year exemption from payment from people whose income is marginally above Universal Credit level, need to travel to provide care for a disabled person/people, and whose ability to use public transport is limited or constrained by the time pressure related to their journey.

Isn't it unfair?

Lower income people and many ethnic minorities are least likely to own a car but are more likely to suffer health effects from air pollution. So tackling pollution helps address inequality.

Isn't it just another tax?

By law the income from the ULEZ can only be spent only on improving transport. To provide a good alternative to driving, the mayor has announced a major expansion of the bus network in Outer London, covering many areas including Harrow, Southall, Havering, Lewisham, Greenwich, and services to Whipps Cross Hospital in East London⁶. Improving public transport is vital for low-income Londoners, most of whom cannot afford a car. They also tend to live in the areas with the worst air. More cycle paths should be provided. Encouraging people to cycle by making it safe both reduces pollution and improves Londoners' health.

Isn't it unpopular?

Most Londoners favour a reduction in vehicle emissions, to reduce the destruction caused by climate breakdown, and to improve air quality. One recent poll shows that Londoners want the zone to be expanded London-wide, with nearly twice as many Londoners supporting the expansion than opposing it⁷. Nearly two-thirds of Londoners think that “motorised transport” makes a large or very large contribution to climate change⁸. Only one in six says they would not consider using public transport instead of driving⁸.

What if I have to use a car?

By cutting traffic, the ULEZ expansion will reduce the amount of time wasted sitting in traffic jams, on average 148 hours per driver per year⁹. This congestion takes £5.1 billion per year out of London’s economy¹⁰. People in cars are also affected by air pollution (which can mean more exposure than someone walking or cycling in the same street) so cleaning the air helps us all¹¹. Moreover free-flowing traffic emits less harmful emissions for every mile travelled.

What next?

Friends of the Earth supports the expansion of ULEZ but beyond that we want to see a comprehensive Smart Road User Charging scheme. This would replace all the existing charges (congestion charge and ULEZ) with one system that encourages people to drive less and so does more to reduce congestion, air pollution and climate wrecking emissions. It should take into account how polluting a vehicle is but also what alternatives there are so, for example, it could charge less in an area where there is sparse public transport.

- For more information, contact londonfoenetwork@gmail.com
- For more information from Friends of the Earth on air pollution see: <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/which-neighbourhoods-have-worst-air-pollution>
- Join a Friends of the Earth or climate action group [here](#)



Notes:

1 <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/new-imperial-study-on-mayors-aq-policies>

2 <https://www.mylondon.news/news/london-ulez-sadiq-khans-plans-25542582>

3 https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_health_burden_of_current_air_pollution_and_future_health_benefits_of_mayoral_air_quality_policies_january2020.pdf (Table 21)

4 <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/ulez-expansion-greater-london-polluting-cars-mayor-sadiq-khan-b1040941.html>

5 https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/clean_air_for_all_londoners_report_-_environment_committee.pdf

6 <https://www.london.gov.uk/ultra-low-emission-zone-will-be-expanded-london-wide>

7 https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/zh6ic3x5sw/GLA_Results_220725_W.pdf

8 <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Policy%20themes/Environment/Climate%20Change%20Polling%202021%20Report%20FINAL%281%29.pdf>

9 <https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/cleanair?tool=qanda> (Consultation brochure)

10 <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-announces-bold-plans-for-a-greener-london>

11 <https://www.iqair.com/blog/air-quality/in-car-pollution>