

DEAN RUSSELL MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

February 2021

Dear Sadiq,

Proposed 'border tax' for entry into London

It was with deep dismay that we learned of your intention to begin charging drivers to enter London. As the representatives of both Londoners and those people and businesses who rely on transport links with the capital, we are urging you to reconsider this damaging proposal.

You rightly portray the notion that 'London is Open' – a sentiment that is shared by Londoners and their closest neighbours in the South East alike. You will understand our surprise, therefore, that in TfL's Financial Sustainability Plan you proposed charging drivers at least £3.50 to cross the GLA boundary. This is completely at odds with the openness you celebrate, and would divide communities, increase the cost of trading across the South East and risk the economic recovery of hundreds of thousands of businesses after coronavirus.

Those of us with constituencies outside the Greater London boundary have constituents who travel into the capital on a regular basis and they will now face the prospect of a £31 charge every time they do so – given the combined cost of your proposed border tax, the congestion charge and the ultra-low emission zone. For those of us with constituencies just inside the Greater London boundary, your proposed tax will have a deeply damaging impact on business located in our constituencies and far reaching impacts on family life because relatives will be faced with an additional cost for travelling to visit one another.

A number of our residents will drive to places such as Stanmore and Epping in order to park their car and use public transport to continue their journey. This proposed border tax will cost them an extra £1,000 a year when they are already contributing to TfL's finances through the fares that they pay. This applies not just to people travelling for work, but also those travelling into London to support the Capital's night-time economy, crucial to the city's financial recovery.

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In addition to this a number of our constituent's travel to London hospitals on a weekly basis for life saving treatment. It is also worth noting that a number of those resident in our constituencies are front-line public-sector workers that work in London. Charging teachers, nurses, police officers etc. is not the right thing to do.

We are aware that you will soon be entering into negotiations with the Government on a third bailout package for Transport for London. While we of course recognise the significant impact the coronavirus pandemic has had on TfL's finances, and welcome the £3.4 billion provided by the Government to support TfL in the previous two bailouts, there is no denying that years of financial mismanagement had left TfL unable to cope with these challenges.

Under your leadership, TfL's debt has risen, projects have been delayed and income has been thrown away on your pet projects. It is unacceptable that you would now look to recover the funding gap by introducing a damaging border tax on families and businesses surrounding London, who are not your constituents and therefore not able to hold you to account at the ballot box.

It has become a tiresome trend that you threaten draconian options ahead of entering into funding negotiations with the Government. We urge you to drop this latest threat, which has unsettled our constituents who hope to use the month and years ahead to rebuild their family and business finances after the pandemic and encourage you to work constructively with the Government on a funding settlement that works for both Londoners and UK taxpayers.

Yours sincerely,



Dean Russell, MP for Watford.
Sir Roger Gale, MP for North Thanet
Gareth Johnson, MP for Dartford
Greg Smith, MP for Buckingham
David Simmonds, MP for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner
Andrew Rosindell, MP for Romford
Henry Smith, MP for Crawley
Jonathan Lord, MP for Woking
Bob Blackman, MP for Harrow East
Craig Mackinlay, MP for South Thanet
Gagan Mohindra, MP for South West Hertfordshire
Robert Halfon, MP for Harlow
Gareth Bacon, MP for Orpington
Steve Baker, MP for Wycombe
Gordon Henderson, MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey
Sir David Amess, MP for Southend West
Felicity Buchan, MP for Kensington
Sir Charles Walker KBE, MP for Broxbourne
John Redwood, MP for Wokingham
Sir Bob Neill, MP for Bromley & Chislehurst
Oliver Heald, MP for North East Hertfordshire
Kelly Tolhurst, MP for Rochester & Strood
Laura Trott, MP for Sevenoaks