

FREE LONDON



**LAURENCE FOX**   
London Manifesto 2021



## **LAURENCE FOX: MY MANIFESTO FOR LONDON**

I will unlock London and free Londoners to once again create and make the most of the opportunities our great city has to offer.

Such has been the shock of lockdown, life will not magically return to normal. We have lived under dire threat to stay home, close our businesses, and keep away from friends and families. Much of our once thriving capital has been deserted, our streets are awash with crime, the Mayor's woke policies are bitterly divisive and his promised new homes have not been built. He is spending your Council Tax on his own political ambition at the cost of our city's decline.

Unlike the Mayor and other lockdown candidates, my ambition is to unlock London and free Londoners. London will be a Covid passport-free city. There will be no mask mandate in London. Children will not have to wear masks in school.

London has a choice. This election is a referendum on the continued lockdown of London. You can either vote for one of the lockdown candidates who want to continue restricting and controlling our lives. Or you can vote for me, for freedom, to send a message clear and strong that Londoners want to reclaim their city.

The answer to restoring our lives, prosperity and reputation as the world's greatest city is simple. It's your freedom. It's your London. Reclaim it.

## MY PLAN FOR LONDON.

- 1.** I will deliver free travel on the tubes and buses for 6 months to help Londoners get back on the move and provide London's economy with a huge economic boost.
- 2.** I will scrap Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and underused cycle lanes which have divided our communities, blocked our streets, increased pollution, delayed emergency services, destroyed black cabs businesses, and seen millions of new fines imposed on Londoners.
- 3.** I will take the politics out of the police and introduce tough New York style community policing to target petty crime and prevent hardened criminals and gangsters from moving in.
- 4.** I will enable offices and shops to be converted to residential use and put aside 50 years of political correctness about the Green Belt to open the way to 250,000 new homes for Londoners.
- 5.** I will celebrate the end of lockdown with a 'Festival of London', a one-day Festival with venue owners opening their doors for free to showcase and celebrate the talent and creativity of our amazing city.
- 6.** I will end the divisive and discriminatory wokery that has infected our city, instead promoting freedom of thought and speech. I will disband the Mayor's statue commission, instead erecting new statues to celebrate the lives of great Londoners.



# 1. I WILL DELIVER FREE TRAVEL ON TUBES AND BUSES FOR 6 MONTHS.

Londoners need to be free to get back to work, back to having fun and back to seeing our friends and families. The heart of our city is being hollowed out while we stay away.

Lockdown has cost London's economy more than £55 billion, but it has cost Londoners far more in lost income, missed opportunity, time without loved ones, cancelled operations and rising crime.

Local business districts, high street shops, hospitality and entertainment attractions are dying for the lack of customers. Visitor numbers are down by more than three-quarters. Murders are up 41 per cent. London's jobless rate is the highest in the country.

The Mayor has campaigned for lockdown restrictions to continue for another 18 months. The Chancellor has borrowed £355 billion to keep us at home and our businesses shut. London, 23 per cent of the UK economy, has been stopped. I will invest £500 million to get London back on the move, provide the capital's economy with a huge economic stimulus, and help Londoners out of lockdown to again make the most of the opportunities our great city has to offer.



Such has been the shock of lockdown, things will not magically return to normal. Freeing London depends on a sustainable, thriving public transport system. London's tubes and buses are essential to its recovery.

The benefits go beyond Transport for London. More of us getting about town will generate much needed business for our retailers, sandwich bars, theatres, pubs and coffee shops. Being able to visit family and friends means a happier city, with less stress and greater well-being. Free tubes and buses is another great reason for visitors near and far to enjoy our city. More of us on public transport means less need for our cars.

Transport for London depends on fares for over 50 per cent of its income. Passenger income has been running at around £20 million per week, with the government bailing out the Mayor to keep the network operational. The cost of 6 months free travel to Transport for London is £480 million in the current environment.

More of us using the tube and bus network will save us from the Mayor's fare increases, Council Tax rises and congestion charges. Increased passenger numbers are the only way we can ensure a high quality public transport system which is so essential to the UK and London economy. The faster we get there, the greater the benefit to London's and the UK's economic recovery.

# HOW ARE WE GOING TO PAY FOR 6 MONTH'S FREE TRAVEL ON TUBES AND BUSES?

## Transport for London (TfL)

### Overview

- The Mayor serves as Chairman of Board and has statutory authority to set transport fares and road-user charges (CC/LEZ/ULEZ).
- In accordance with TfL's Standing Orders, the Board delegates to the Chief Officers the discharge of core functions and day-to-day management of the business of the TfL Group.
- The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for financial management, including treasury/investments/borrowing, subject to scrutiny by the Finance Committee.
- The Borrowing strategy is independent of GLA/GIS but subject to the same codes/principles/sources/prudential indicators.
- The Authorised Limits and Operational Boundaries for external debt are set by the Mayor.

### Funding

Total budget of £10.3bn (£7.5bn revenue expenditure + £2.8bn capital spending)

The revenue sources annually (pre-pandemic) were:

- Fares/passenger income (c. £4.9bn - 47%) – the Mayor froze for duration of term + maintained concessions
- Congestion charge/road network charges/commercial activity/sponsorship (c. £1.2bn - 12%)
- Grants including Crossrail/Northern Line/Retained Business Rates/Council Tax Precept (c. £3.4bn - 33%)
- Borrowing & cash reserves (c. £0.9bn - 8%)
- (N.B. operating grant from the Department for Transport finished at the end of the 2017-18 financial year.)

## The Problems

- Lockdown-induced impact on passenger income - forecast to be £1.5bn in 2020-21 (vs. previously budgeted £5.0bn).
- Resulting shortfall of >£3bn plugged by Gov bailout/"extraordinary grant" of c. £2.6bn (+ additional borrowings/cost savings/use of reserves).
- Passenger income is anticipated to rise to £3.3bn in 2021-22, but a similar shortfall of £3bn is again expected and a further Gov £2.9bn bailout is already budgeted; TfL compromised in 2021-22 by limited reserves to draw on (£80m in 2021-22 vs. £650m in 2020-21) and by determination to undertake virtually zero new incremental borrowing (outside of special DfT Crossrail scheme) due to affordability issues, and to refinance all debt maturities until 2024/25 because "It is unlikely that we will have sufficient resources to make any principal repayments in the next few years." £360m of debt maturities in 2021-22 (excluding commercial paper).
- As of 19 February 2021 (datapoint for most recent Finance Committee Meeting) gross outstanding borrowing was £12.9bn, with a weighted average maturity of 17 years and an average interest rate of 3.3%; expected to rise to £13.1bn by end of financial year 2020-21.
- This is within the £14.5bn Authorised Limit set by the Mayor, but total debt servicing costs (interest + principal repayments) budgeted for TfL in 2021-22 = £0.6bn (£540m just in interest).
- Shortfall of £1.5bn identified for 2022-23; £1.6bn from 2023 onwards.
- Passenger income currently running down £65m per week, with Tube journeys/income down c. -85% (year-on-year), bus journeys down c. -70%; 2021-22 budget assumes services operating at starting 40% of pre-pandemic capacity, rising to 80% capacity (avg. 65%) by year-end.

## Current status

Through ongoing negotiations, TfL has outlined a £15.8bn multi-year funding package from UK government on a new funding model, in exchange for producing a long-term Financial Sustainability Plan to prove how it will become self-sufficient in the long run. Given the bailout conditions set in the 2020-21 agreements (£250m of savings required in second half of year alone), previous Mayoral licence/flexibility over setting of fares and other charges is highly likely to be compromised.

*"Let's be really frank about this - there is no negotiation. We are answering myriad questions, literally hundreds of questions for clarification. But there is no negotiation per se."* Andy Byford, Commissioner of Transport for London

*"We now have very few growth projects left. As a starting point, this will not deliver the MTS (Mayor's transport strategy). There remains a sizable risk we don't have enough money to complete Crossrail as things currently stand."* Simon Kilonback, Chief Finance Officer, Transport for London



## FREE TRANSPORT SUMMARY

There's over £1bn more in Sadiq's own TFL borrowing headroom (£13.1 billion vs £14.5 billion).

The Mayor has budgeted for another £2.9 billion of government grants for TFL to subsidise his lockdown plans to keep the number of tube passengers low for at least another 18 months. I will use a fraction of that grant to boost passenger numbers to pre-Lockdown levels, unlock London and boost our economy.

I will unlock London, free Londoners and give the capital a massive economic boost by providing free tube and bus travel for 6 months. When we restart fares, not only will Londoners and London's economy have had a massive boost, tube and bus customer levels will be much higher and TfL's revenues will grow much faster.

The Chancellor has borrowed £355 billion to keep us at home and our businesses shut. Lockdown has cost London's economy more than £55 billion. London, 23 per cent of the UK economy, has been virtually stopped. Every day London underperforms is another day the taxpayer is paying for us to sit at home, rising welfare costs and closed businesses. It is in the national interest to unlock London now and help get Londoners back on the move, boost our capital's economy, and start working for growth, not managing decline.

## 2. I WILL SCRAP LOW TRAFFIC NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHEMES AND UNDERUSED CYCLE LANES.

### I WILL BE A CHAMPION FOR LONDON'S BLACK CAB DRIVERS.

I want late night taxis to drop my kids off safely at my door, not streets away. I want our emergency services to be able to get to us as quickly as possible. I want an end to miles of traffic jams next to empty cycle lanes.

I will scrap Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and underused cycle lanes, introduced with no proper consultation with local people, which have divided our communities, blocked our streets, increased pollution, delayed emergency services, destroyed black cabs businesses, and seen millions of new fines imposed on Londoners.

Black cabs are an iconic part of London, famous the world over. Lockdown has seen their fares down by up to 80 per cent with many drivers struggling to cope financially. One in five taxis have already been handed back by drivers for storage. Unlike the Mayor, I will include black cabs in my transport strategy. It is essential for the Black Cab industry to survive, so people can get safely around when businesses reopen.





### **3. I WILL TAKE THE POLITICS OUT OF THE MET TO FREE OUR POLICE TO FIGHT CRIME, WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR.**

The Metropolitan Police Force (the Met) has been politicised. It has made their job impossible.

Under Sadiq Khan's leadership more time is spent policing law-abiders than confronting law-breakers.

Under his watch:

- Murder rate is at a 3-year high, up by 41 per cent.
- Robbery is up by 73 per cent.
- Street muggings are up by 56 per cent.
- Knife crime is up by 28 per cent.

Meantime, the policing of Reclaim the Streets, Black Lives Matter, Extinction Rebellion, Antifa, Pride, Stonewall, anti and pro-lockdown marches, has seen the Met and its officers reduced to a political football, dragged into controversy and compromise, losing the confidence of Londoners.

I will take the politics out of the police. The Met must police streets, not tweets.

I will protect the right to peaceful protest. The Met should not support or take a stand against them.

I will introduce New York's 'Broken Windows' policy to end the petty, low level, local crime that stains our communities and encourages criminals and gangsters to move in.

I will be the first Mayor to uphold the provisions in the Equality Act that provide legislative protection for women to organise and speak freely.

I will cull the Mayor's bloated administration by a third and support 10 new police apprenticeships for every City Hall administrator removed. That's at least 3,000 new police constables heading for the beat.





## **4. I WILL BUILD 250,000 NEW HOMES FOR LONDONERS AND CHANGE PLANNING RULES SO HOMES CAN BE BUILT MORE QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY.**

I will enable offices and shops to be converted to residential use and put aside political correctness to reconsider how we use the Green Belt, much of which is scrubland and semi-industrial.

The population of London has risen at a rate three-times faster than its number of houses.

In 30 years, the population has grown by 2.6 million (from 6.7 million to 9.3 million) while dwellings have only risen by 740,000 (from 2.75 million to 3.49 million).

26 per cent of people aged 20 to 34 live with their parents and that number is rising.

London has the highest measurement of concealed families (3.3 per cent), multi-family occupants in a household in addition to the primary family.

The Mayor has woefully under delivered on his promises to create new housing for London, despite huge government funding support. Over his 5-year Mayoral term, he's barely built half the number he pledged.

Lockdown has decimated our high streets. I will accelerate the government's planning changes to allow the conversion of shops and offices to residential use, providing homes and creating much needed footfall in the heart of our communities.

I will accelerate TfL's plans for development of its sites in London and free it to expand its proposed property development activities and partnerships.

I will conduct a full audit of the Green Belt. How we should protect its precious landscapes forever and think about using its waste lands, scrap yards, rubbish dumps and tatty industrial areas for affordable housing.



## **5. I WILL CREATE A FESTIVAL OF LONDON SO THAT EVERYONE CAN GET BACK TO ENJOYING THE WORLD'S GREATEST CITY.**

I am calling on London's brilliant performing arts sector to help me create a 'Festival of London', with a day of free entry, to help showcase the capital as the world's leading cultural and entertainment city, inspire Londoners back to enjoy the theatre and other performing arts, and to attract tourists back to enjoy our city.

Every year there will be a Festival of London, where for one day every theatre ticket is free. We need to get the life blood of tourism flowing back into London. I want to get Londoners back to enjoying themselves and remind the world why London is the world's greatest cultural capital.

Lockdown has meant that many venues have either been entirely unable to open or only able to open with significant capacity constraints, making them unprofitable. As a result, many businesses and staff are on their knees, with 40 per cent of creative staff having considered leaving the sector due to being ineligible for furlough according to the Equity union.

Across London, data from 2020 shows that the performing arts sector saw a 60 per cent fall in output in 2020, with arts and culture economic output in the fourth quarter down 46 per cent on the same period in 2019. With 40 per cent of all the UK's arts and entertainment jobs being based in London (47,000), extended lockdown conditions are only putting the industry in greater peril.



## **6. I WILL END THE DIVISIVE AND DISCRIMINATORY WOKERY THAT HAS INFECTED OUR CITY, INSTEAD PROMOTING FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND SPEECH.**

London is one of the great cultural and intellectual centres of the world. We have a proud heritage of standing up for free thinking, free speech, and radical innovation, from the Levellers and Milton, to John Wilkes, Thomas Paine, the Chartists and suffragettes, to the sexual and political revolutions of the 1960s. Through the ages, London has provided sanctuary for free thinkers fleeing from persecution.

But under the Woke-Master-in-Chief, the Mayor, many Londoners have been silenced, scared to say what they think and pilloried if they do. London's freedom of speech and thought has been cancelled in the name of political correctness.

- I will end this divisive and discriminatory wokery and work to re-establish London as one of the world's great free cities.
- Our schools and universities should help our children to learn how to think, not what to think.
- London will be the home of a new Debating Forum, a dedicated centre to promote new ideas and arguments and encourage young Londoners to be heard.
- I will support 'free speech gangs' to arm our young people with words, not knives.
- I will establish a Young Lords, representing our diverse city, to help advise me as Mayor and ensure young people's voices are heard.
- I will disband the Mayor's statue commission, instead erecting new statues to celebrate the lives of great Londoners.



## AND ANOTHER THING...

Hammersmith Bridge will be opened to pedestrians and cyclists by the end of the year and a full bridge solution implemented by 2024.

A union flag will fly outside every school in London. Children will be taught about the good that Britain has done in the past as well as the bad.

Any institutions that seek to undermine our shared culture via critical social justice and critical race theory will lose any and all Mayoral Funding in London. Our culture is a reflection of us all and must be protected with all our collective energy.

I will protect the rights of women to organize and speak freely. No woman will be forced to share a private bathroom or changing space with a man.



