



The Climate Emergency: Policies to Decarbonise London's Road Transport

A discussion document for the London Boroughs

In response to public alarm over climate change, nearly two thirds of London councils had declared a climate emergency by October 2019. While it is relatively straightforward for a council to declare an emergency, it is far more challenging to commit to specific interventions that will deliver big cuts in carbon emissions.

To achieve the goals set out in their emergency declarations, councils across London will need to take bolder action on transport. In 2018 transport accounted for a third of UK carbon dioxide emissions,¹ with the large majority arising from road transport. And while UK CO2 emissions overall have fallen 39% since 1990, transport emissions are down just 3.2%², making it the worst performing sector. In London, total vehicle miles have fallen by a mere 4% between 1993 and 2018.³

London Living Streets has identified a range of key policies that local authorities can adopt **right now** to reduce carbon emissions. Please note that the vast majority of these policies have either been adopted by another major global city, by local authorities in London or elsewhere in the UK.

While these policies focus on reducing CO2 emissions, they also have wider relevance and will also address issues around public health (physical inactivity and obesity), air pollution, road casualties and social inequality.

The impacts of climate change are rapidly becoming more evident and are being manifested closer to home and public support is swelling, enabling local authorities to take bigger and braver steps.

¹ Dept. for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, *2018 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, 28 March 2019.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/790626/2018-provisional-emissions-statistics-report.pdf

² 2018 UK GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, PROVISIONAL FIGURES, National Statistics

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/790626/2018-provisional-emissions-statistics-report.pdf

³ Dept. for Transport, *Road Traffic Statistics*, last updated 14 May 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/road-traffic-statistics-tra>

Policies to reduce the use and impact of fossil-fuel-powered motor vehicles

1. **Roll out controlled parking zones (CPZ) and emissions-based parking charges.** Parking charges should a) reflect the full cost of providing road space; b) the value to users of the parking provision; and c) reduce the number of trips in motor vehicles. Controlled parking zones should cover the whole borough and charges should be based on emissions (City of London, Westminster, Islington and Merton all have higher parking charges for diesel vehicles). Parking charges could also discourage residents and visitors from using larger cars such as SUVs. Find out what percentage of your borough's roads are covered by a CPZ on the London Boroughs Healthy Streets Scorecard.⁴
2. **Introduce a Workplace Parking Levy (WPL).** This helps reduce traffic and generates funds for borough spending on active travel. Note the success of Nottingham's Workplace Parking Levy. Levies are also being considered in the London boroughs of Hounslow, Merton, Brent and Camden. TfL has introduced detailed guidance⁵.
3. An easy win is for all **new residential developments** within the North & South Circulars to be **car-free**. Where Public Transport Access Levels (PTAL) are lower, Local Implementation Plan /Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 Agreements should invest in walking, cycling and public transport to bring PTAL levels up to those acceptable for car-free development. Check out TfL's PTAL Map of London⁶ (Darker = better public transport coverage.)
4. **Introduce cargo-bike delivery hubs** across the borough. Early opportunities may be in areas with Business Improvement Districts (BIDS), where regeneration is occurring and local town centres. Supplement sustainable last-mile delivery with freight consolidation, local hubs for click-and-collect in addition to parcel collection centres.
5. **Prioritise the needs of people walking** and consider "pedestrian priority" streets in areas with very high footfall (such as around railway stations and local town centres). The City of London is aiming for half of its street space to be pedestrian priority by 2044⁷ with roads and streets being either fully pedestrianised, or "access only" for vehicles where vehicles, including cycles, give way to people walking.
6. Make clear your borough's support for **road user charging** and an extension of the **ULEZ Ultra-Low Emission Zone** to the M25 to cover all 33 boroughs.
7. Consider opportunities for parts of the borough to become **car-free**. Discussions about the potential for large car-free areas are back on the table. Pontevedra in Spain⁸ is a recent example and Vauban, near Freiburg in Germany⁹ is an earlier example. Oslo¹⁰ is also fast becoming car-free in its centre. This offers the greatest opportunities for

⁴ London Boroughs Healthy Streets Scorecard, 2019. <https://londonlivingstreets.com/london-boroughs-healthy-streets-scorecard/>

⁵ Transport for London, *Workplace Parking Levies*, <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/boroughs/workplace-parking-levies>

⁶ Transport for London, *Public Transport Access Levels Map for London*, <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/urban-planning-and-construction/planning-with-webcats/webcats>

⁷ City of London *Transport Strategy*, 2019. <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/transport-and-streets/Documents/city-of-london-transport-strategy.pdf>

⁸ *The Guardian*, 'For me this is paradise – life in the Spanish city that banned cars',

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/sep/18/paradise-life-spanish-city-banned-cars-pontevedra>

⁹ *Independent*, 26 June 2009, 'Auto-ban: German town goes car-free', <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/auto-ban-german-town-goes-car-free-1720021.html>

¹⁰ *Clean Technica*, 5 March 2019, 'Oslo is (almost) car-free – and likes it that way', <https://cleantechnica.com/2019/03/05/oslo-is-almost-car-free-and-likes-it-that-way/>

promoting active travel and reducing emissions and improving air quality. Remember there are many places where car ownership is very low¹¹. Read Carfree Cities by Joel Crawford (2000) for inspiration.

8. **Replace vehicle parking spaces with space for climate-resilient urban greening, parklets¹² and cycle parking.** Following the policies adopted in Oslo that have dramatically reduced the number of motor vehicle parking spaces.
9. Whilst **electric vehicles** have a role to play in reducing carbon and particulate emissions, they are not the entire solution. Charging points and incentives for electric vehicles should be provided only as a shared communal service, with equivalent incentives for non-motorised traffic. All facilities must be provided off-street or on carriageway – never on the footway. Read London Living Streets hierarchy for EV infrastructure.¹³
10. Set a date by which all vehicles operating under contracts with the council must be **petrol/diesel free**.

Policies to encourage low-carbon forms of travel

Remember that walking and cycling involve almost zero CO2 emissions and public transport causes lower per capita CO2 emissions than car journeys (European Environment Agency, CO2 Emissions from Passenger Transport).¹⁴

1. **Divide the borough into low-traffic neighbourhoods** such as being developed in Lewisham¹⁵ and across Waltham Forest.¹⁶ Low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) remove through traffic from residential areas so walking, cycling, living and playing become easier, safer and more attractive. For more information visit our Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods page.¹⁷ Also watch our three-minute video.¹⁸
2. **Provide infrastructure that makes cycling a safer and more convenient way to travel.** The priority must be protected cycle routes on borough main roads. NB 43% of all London's fatal and serious cycling casualties occur on borough-managed main roads¹⁹ but very few of these roads have any protection for people on bikes. (Check out your borough's progress on cycling infrastructure on The Healthy Streets London Boroughs Scorecard.²⁰) Seville²¹ developed a whole network in a matter of a few years. **Storage infrastructure** is also essential and includes secure, weather-proof cycle storage facilities in residential areas and estates; and bulk storage facilities at rail and tube stations.

¹¹UK Data Explorer - Census 2011: Wards in London- % households with no access to a car or van
<https://ukdataexplorer.com/census/london/#KS404EW0008>

¹² London Living Streets, 'Why Parklets could be truly transformational for our streets and our communities',
<https://londonlivingstreets.com/parklets-campaign/>

¹³ London Living Streets, 'Electric Vehicle Infrastructure', <https://londonlivingstreets.com/electric-vehicle-infrastructure/>

¹⁴ European Environment Agency, 'CO₂ emissions from passenger transport', <https://www.eea.europa.eu/media/infographics/co2-emissions-from-passenger-transport/view>

¹⁵ Borough of Lewisham, Consultation 'Healthy Neighbourhoods Cells Map', 2019,
https://consultation.lewisham.gov.uk/planning/lip/user_uploads/appendix-c--healthy-neighbourhoods-cells-map-v4-2.pdf

¹⁶ Borough of Waltham Forest, map and details about Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes. <https://www.enjoywalthamforest.co.uk/work-in-your-area/>

¹⁷ London Living Streets, 'Low Traffic Neighbourhoods', <https://londonlivingstreets.com/low-traffic-liveable-neighbourhoods/>

¹⁸ London Living Streets YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2k8QXPNFQ-Q>

¹⁹ Transport for London, Publications and Reports, Road Safety. <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/road-safety>

²⁰ London Boroughs Healthy Streets Scorecard, 2019. <https://londonlivingstreets.com/london-boroughs-healthy-streets-scorecard/>

²¹ *The Guardian*, 'How Seville transformed itself into the cycling capital of southern Europe'.
<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/jan/28/seville-cycling-capital-southern-europe-bike-lanes>

3. **Expand and prioritise bus travel:** Londoners travel by bus more than any other form of public transport. This is also the most economical way of expanding London's public transport system. Work with Transport for London (TfL) to provide new and innovative forms of bus provision in areas poorly served by public transport, especially in Outer London. Councils can also prioritise bus movement to reduce journey times by introducing more bus lanes and/or bus priority corridors.
4. **Enhance the infrastructure and public realm for pedestrians.** Measures should include **improved crossings** (on 'desire lines', with shorter wait times for people walking and more time to cross); **additional road crossings**, particularly at bus stops; **widened pavements** outside stations, in local town centres, and wherever there are high numbers of pedestrians; **more public seating**, particularly for older residents and parents and carers with buggies; **greening** of local streets via tree planting and pocket parks. All of these proposals offer opportunities to improve conditions for those with impaired mobility.
5. **Develop a network of walking routes** that connect green spaces, town centres, stations, attractions and other amenities. Initial ideas have been proposed by Southwark Living Streets²² and by London Living Streets for Central London.²³
6. **Roll out 'school streets' across the borough.** School streets transform roads around schools so only people walking or cycling can use them at the start and end of the school day. Given school run traffic makes up 25% of all London's morning traffic, a roll-out of school streets may have a huge impact on congestion, as well as on children's health by reducing air pollution and encouraging children to walk and cycle to school. This idea was pioneered in Hackney²⁴ and being replicated across London. Use Schools Streets as pilots for wider changes and a wider shift to walking and cycling.
7. In order to build community appetite for LTNs, councils can easily implement **play streets** so communities can close their streets to traffic for a couple of hours once a week to let children play.

It is time London thinks along the lines of Madrid where wide areas (including main roads) exclude all vehicles apart from those belonging to residents, zero-emissions delivery vehicles, zero-emission taxis, public transport and emergency vehicles. Boroughs could roll out such zones over time, starting with areas with high Public Transport Access Level (PTAL) ratings.

These policies are absolutely vital and urgent if London is to play its part in heading off the worst effects of global warming.

If you would like further information, or to discuss any of these proposed policy measures, contact:

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Robert Molteno, Emma Griffin, Paul Gasson, Jeremy Leach London Living Streets – 8th November 2019

²² Southwark Living Streets, 'A Green Walking Network for Southwark', Feb. 2019,

<https://southwarklivingstreets.files.wordpress.com/2019/07/southwarkgreenwalkingnetwork-proposalv.1-19feb19.pdf>

²³ London Living Streets, 'Central London Walking Network', <https://londonlivingstreets.com/central-london-walking-network/>

²⁴ Borough of Hackney, 'School streets', <https://hackney.gov.uk/school-streets>