



Councillor Adam Harrison
Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden
Adam.Harrison@camden.gov.uk

www.camden.gov.uk
5 Pancras Square
London, N1C 4AG

The Rt. Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

17 June 2021

Via Email

Dear Mr Shapps,

The Government must commit to replacing all diesel passenger and freight locomotives with electric or zero-combustion alternatives by 2035, and the withdrawal of all diesel-only traction power by 2030

Exposure to air pollution is recognised as one of the leading causes of mortality in the UK, and Public Health England attributes up to 36,000 deaths each year to poor air quality.

While rail transportation is an efficient and less polluting method for moving passengers and goods compared to road transportation and aviation, the continued use of polluting diesel trains on Britain's railways represents a persistent threat to public health and occupational health.

The GB Rail Industry 'Air Quality Strategic Framework' commits to strive for "*a rail industry with a minimal impact on local air quality*". However there is no coherent industry plan for railway electrification or phasing out diesel trains, which means that our railways will remain a long-term source of health-damaging air pollution.

Approximately 6% of all NO_x and 3% of all fine particulate (PM_{2.5}) emissions in Camden are from rail, and in Westminster the figures are 2% and 1% for NO_x and PM_{2.5}, respectively. These numbers may not appear significant compared to other sources of pollution, but the highly localised air quality impacts affect the health of residents who live in close proximity to railways. Furthermore, a 2019 study¹ found that air pollution was worse inside stations than outside, with this difference being attributed primarily to emissions from diesel trains. More must be done to protect the health of those who work in the rail industry, for passengers and for those living near stations or diesel rail routes.

¹ <https://www.sparkrail.org/Lists/Records/DispForm.aspx?ID=26029>

We urge you to commit to the following actions, which we would be happy to discuss with you at any time:

- Set a target for the withdrawal of all diesel-only trains by 2030, and a deadline of 2035 for the total phase-out of diesel as a fuel
- Launch a comprehensive programme of railway electrification to address gaps in the electrified network and to enable the transition away from diesel as a locomotive fuel
- Commence a rolling programme of engine replacement, focusing initially on the 40% of diesel engines used on railways in Britain which are not certified to any emission standard, and operators or routes which have a high usage of older diesel locomotives (such as the Chiltern Railways franchise)
- Require all new freight locomotives to be fully bi- or tri-mode and capable of running on electrical power, to cut out avoidable emissions on lines which are already electrified
- During interim years mandate the retrofitting of exhaust aftertreatment technologies for all diesel engines which do not currently have these systems
- Invest in research and development for alternative fuels, hybrid-retrofit technologies, and other innovative solutions which will help to reduce emissions as an interim measure.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "A. Harrison". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Adam Harrison
Bloomsbury Ward councillor
Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden