

**Joan Walley MP**  
Chair  
Environmental Audit Committee  
House of Commons  
14 Tothill Street  
London SW1P 3JA

Date: 03 NOV 2014

Dear Joan

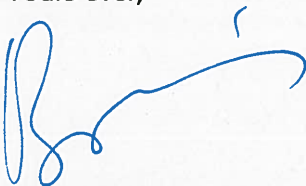
I am in receipt of your letter dated 29 October concerning unfounded and baseless accusations by Clean Air in London.

I enclose the letter between my office and King's College following media coverage in July saying that Oxford Street is the most polluted place on the planet. As you can see, we are not disputing King's College data but rather asking only that "in the future more rigour will be applied to public statements". It is worth noting that King's College staff have told us that the way the original claim about Oxford Street was presented by the media was indeed erroneous, but decided not to refute it publicly.

Any reasonable reading of the letter shows that there is absolutely no threat, veiled or otherwise, to King's College's funding. The only reference to a "threat" has been made by a single anonymous source "close to King's" who spoke to *The Times*. I am therefore pleased to be able to reassure the Committee categorically that Greater London Authority funding decisions are not influenced by King's research nor the way in which it is presented; in fact we are dependent on the College's work for our policy development, implementation and to measure their effects.

I am saddened that the Committee feels it necessary to ask for reassurance on the basis of baseless accusations made by a single anonymous source and repeated by Clean Air in London but I hope my response gives you the reassurance you are looking for.

Yours ever,



**Boris Johnson**  
Mayor of London

Enc.

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Professor Sir Richard Trainer KBE**  
Principal and President  
Kings College London  
James Clark Maxwell Building  
57 Waterloo Road  
London SE1 8WA

Date: 14 July 2014

*Dear Sir Richard*

## Comments about Air Quality in London

I am writing on behalf of the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, following some recent media coverage about London's air quality.

Since the 1990s King's College Environmental Research Group (ERG) has been a leader in the field of air quality research. Working with the Mayor's Office at the Greater London Authority, Transport for London and the London boroughs, your researchers have helped create one of the world's most comprehensive air quality monitoring networks, build the London Atmospheric Emissions Inventory and provide invaluable information on air quality to Londoners.

We are proud to be working with King's College ERG to ensure we have the most complete analysis possible in order to deliver evidence based policies to drive improvements in London's air quality.

I was, however, surprised and disappointed when I read in the Sunday Times of 6 July a misleading quote from a researcher at ERG, which stated that: "[Oxford Street has the] highest [levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>)] in the world in terms of both hourly and annual mean. NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations [in Oxford Street] are as high as they have ever been in the long history of air pollution." This story has since been picked up in wide-ranging media and has been the basis for extensive commentary and public concern.

I believe the statement to be misleading for three reasons: pollution levels in London are lower than for many other world cities, other monitoring sites are currently recording higher concentrations of NO<sub>2</sub> than at Oxford Street and various monitoring sites have reported much higher concentrations of NO<sub>2</sub> in the past. Generally speaking the GLA does not rank locations precisely because of the variability between sites and instead we refer to our 187 air quality focus locations, all of which require action to deliver further improvements to air quality. Recent conversations with the ERG, where it is recognised that there is no single "worse location" due to variability between sites, would validate this approach.

Average levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) across monitoring sites near busy roads in Stuttgart, Paris, Munich, Rome and Milan are all higher than those recorded for London. Mexico City's levels are nearly double those of London, and Hong Kong, Istanbul, Beijing and Shanghai all have higher average readings as well.

The phrase "as high as they have ever been in the long history of air pollution" is also misleading. In 2012 Putney High Street recorded concentrations of 155 ug/m<sup>3</sup>, 20 ug/m<sup>3</sup> higher than that currently being recorded at Oxford Street. In 2000 sites in Lagos recorded an equivalent annual average concentrations of 2885 ug/m<sup>3</sup>. In fact, there is emerging evidence of decreases in NO<sub>2</sub> at certain London monitoring sites (Marylebone Road for instance) that was not reflected in the statements made to the reporter.

Finally, the claims about Oxford Street fail to explain our comprehensive approach to monitoring developed in partnership with King's. Whereas many cities do not monitor at kerbside and often choose sheltered locations, in London we have often deliberately sited monitoring equipment at the most polluted locations to enable us to shape policy interventions to tackle local sources. The ERG team are well aware of this and it provides important context which is needed for a fair comparison of monitoring data to take place.

We are all trying to improve air quality in London and we rely on King's expertise to help us monitor pollution and tackle this issue. I fully understand that academics need to make their research understandable to the wider public and therefore media friendly. However, it is important that public statements are supported by evidence and set in the proper context.

I look forward to continuing to work with King's ERG and trust that in the future more rigour will be applied to public statements made by members of the Group's staff. I would, of course, be very happy to have a meeting to discuss this further.



**Matthew Pencharz**

Senior Advisor – Environment and Energy