

## **Statement to RMT London Transport Region**

Dear RMT Members,

As a candidate for Mayor of London, thank you for the opportunity to give you my thoughts around current issues of importance to RMT members.

Greens in London and across the country are strong supporters of trade unions and the rights of workers to organise. This includes the Trade Union Bill, where Caroline Lucas MP has been a star opponent in Parliament, extending to calling for non-violent direct action to oppose the bill if it becomes law. As you may know, RMT backed Caroline Lucas MP in her re-election last year in Brighton Pavilion - the Green Party were extremely grateful for the support provided by RMT members.

The right to strike is particularly threatened by the Trade Union Bill and though the RMT's ballots in London Transport generally exceed the threshold of turnout proposed, it would still impose a standard on unions that isn't applied elsewhere - most notably in the election for Mayor of London, where the highest ever turnout was 45% when I last stood in 2008.

I fully support the requested pledges from the RMT and value their work on behalf of not only their members rights and conditions of work, but in support of passenger safety and the quality of services. I have recently supported Piccadilly Line workers on strike, who are taking action for these reasons.

I look forward to talking in more detail about how I can support you.



**Sian Berry**

Green Party candidate for Mayor of London

### **1. London's transport services**

- **I pledge to improve staffing levels on London transport**
- **I support the reversal of TfL's mass closure programme of ticket offices**
- **I support a railway service under public ownership**
- **I oppose the privatisation of London Underground**
- **I support efficient public transport, publicly funded and managed and run in the interests of the travelling public.**

I opposed the closure of ticket offices on the tube, and supported the campaign to stop closures on the Southern and Thameslink franchises. High levels of staffing are a huge factor in customer satisfaction, as shown by the experience of the Overground after it was created from the virtually unstaffed national rail services.

My policy as Mayor is to continue taking more services under TfL's wing and to increase staffing levels continuously on these services, and to see no more cuts on the tube. So called 'driverless trains' are a meaningless pledge that I don't believe is either possible or desirable. All Londoners know the value of drivers and staff in maintaining passenger safety and in responding when things go wrong.

My transport policy is integrated and involves cutting fares and rebalancing the contribution made by farepayers in favour of more charges on driving and polluting road vehicles in London. This will result in increased funds for investment and a revenue surplus in the latter years of my first term which will be put towards funding new projects and a higher quality service. The flattening of the fare zones and the ability to switch between buses, trains, trams and tubes with my new 'One Ticket' will make public transport more popular with more passengers and a greater need for staff to support them.

When I last ran for Mayor In 2008, the failed Metronet PPP contract had recently been brought under Transport for London's control, and I stood on a platform of also bringing the Tubelines PPP back under TfL's control and run more efficiently for the benefit of Londoners.

I continue this approach in my platform for 2016. Privatisation of the railways has clearly failed - not least because of its effects on worker pay and conditions - and full renationalisation as franchises come up for renewal is the Green Party's policy nationally.

We support regional democratic control of railways so in London our policy is to take all privatised commuter rail services under Transport for London's wing, running them for the public good not private profit. We will increase the frequency and quality of services with new investment and better coordination, particularly on orbital routes to help reduce the need to travel by car in the outer London boroughs. Renationalisation of these services will also allow us to ensure full staffing, including ensuring train guards on all services.

In London we currently have the Overground run on a concession model, the contract for which has just been renewed. This model is preferable to a franchise but still represents outsourcing and a loss of democratic control. We would work to make sure new rail services brought under the Mayor's wing are directly run by TfL in an integrated way, and to bring Overground and the DLR into the same fold at the next opportunity.

The outsourcing of auxiliary staff such as maintenance workers and cleaners is also an issue throughout the public services, and Greens on the London Assembly have fought hard on this since they were first elected in 2000. Green London Assembly members Darren Johnson and Jenny Jones helped establish the Living Wage Unit in City Hall when they had a casting vote over Mayor Ken Livingstone's budget. They have made sure that contracted staff as well as staff directly employed by GLA group agencies are now paid the London Living Wage. We would support further moves to ensure that all outsourced staff are fully unionised and able to fight for further pay rises through their union

Bringing more of our railways into public control under a Green Mayor would result in fair pay for many more low-paid workers, and allow terms and conditions to be brought in line with those of directly employed staff.

## **2. Taxis and private hire vehicles**

- **I support proper regulation of private hire vehicles and reforms to prevent the way Uber is circumventing the law governing the taxi and minicab industry and distorting the market in its own interest**

The current dispute between black taxis and new private hire services including Uber is something I have taken a strong interest in and, in recent months, I have met most of the parties involved to discuss these issues, including private hire drivers represented by GMB, and the StayFareMayor campaign, of which the RMT taxi driver branch is part.

I value London's black taxis, which provide a well-regulated, quality service that London must not lose. As Mayor I will take reasonable steps to regulate the growing number of private hire vehicles, while supporting and promoting ways for people to make shared journeys in both black cabs and private hire cars as a way of making more efficient use of these vehicles.

The hugely increased number of private hire vehicles in London – up more than 20 percent last year alone - is of huge concern to me, not least because it appears to have fuelled an increase in car numbers on our streets in the past couple of years, something that runs against a long trend of diminishing traffic. Without action, there is a risk that the growing use of minicabs could also seriously undermine public transport services.

There are also issues of driver terms and conditions, which Uber is constantly changing and even refuses to acknowledge any responsibility to drivers as an employer. There is evidence that oversubscription of new drivers is undermining the working conditions of many existing private hire drivers, and even leading to some working for less than the minimum wage per hour.

I didn't support all of Transport for London's recent proposals for the regulation of minicabs, but I do agree we need a limit on the number of private hire vehicles and they should be better regulated than they are at the moment.

As Mayor I will work on persuading the Government to allow much greater regulation of private hire vehicles and a cap on numbers. I used to work for my stepfather's private hire taxi firm in Gloucestershire when I was younger, and I know that this would not go much further than the kind of control local authorities have over PHVs. London, as a congested capital city needs to be able to regulate this aspect of transport properly.

## **3. Bus services**

- **I support local authority controlled and co-operatively and municipally owned and run local bus services**
- **I oppose the systematic destruction of bus services**

London's buses are run under a far better model than the rest of the country and the benefits have been seen in recent years with increased bus ridership and improvements in services, while the rest of England has seen systematic cuts and reductions in services.

I worked until recently for Campaign for Better Transport as a road campaigner, but was also closely involved in many actions and work for the organisation's 'Save Our Buses' campaign alongside my colleagues. I deplore the cuts in local authority supported bus services, as this will have serious social consequences for the many people who do not own a car, including many older people, students and people on low incomes.

In London, we could see further improvements in our services if contracts were opened up to more locally controlled, non-profit and community bus operators, and if TfL were to operate more buses directly. I would work to make this happen if I were Mayor, and would also invest in developing more routes and better services, particularly in outer London where too many people are still car-dependent.

- **I oppose any reduction in air-pollution controls and support increased investment by TfL in improving "green" transport solutions.**

My plan for bringing air pollution in London within legal limits as soon as possible was published in March this year and was rated a perfect 10/10 by the Clean Air in London campaign. In my work both as a transport campaigner and a local councillor in Camden I have worked hard for many years to raise awareness of air pollution, and pushed for policies that a) don't make it worse by building more roads or widening the ones we have and b) work to reduce pollution in an integrated way, reducing traffic as well as making sure vehicles are switched to cleaner hybrids and electric vehicles.

My plan for cleaning up public transport includes putting more funds into the programme of replacing diesel buses with hybrids and electric vehicles, ensuring the entire fleet is moved to these technologies by 2020 at the latest and that the Ultra Low Emission Zone can be extended to all of London without affecting bus services. This was also a budget amendment tabled this year by the Greens on the London Assembly.

We would also maintain and extend scrappage grants and loan schemes for black cab drivers so that all their vehicles are zero-emissions capable by 2018, and make sure there is a suitable charging infrastructure for them to run on electric power in all areas of inner London at least by 2020.

Thank you for reading.

#### **References and more info:**

Our full manifesto for these elections will be published on 4 April.

Statement in support of tube drivers' right to strike:

<http://www.sianberry.london/news/work/2015-11-09-tube-workers-are-londoners-too/>

Comment in support of Piccadilly Line workers:

<https://twitter.com/sianberry/status/712917459003711488>

Fair fares policy: <http://www.sianberry.london/news/transport/2016-01-04-our-revolutionary-fair-fares-plan/>

Clean air plan: <https://london.greenparty.org.uk/news/2016/03/14/the-time-for-half-hearted-efforts-on-air-pollution-is-past-says-sian-berry/>