

LONDON
TRAVELWATCH

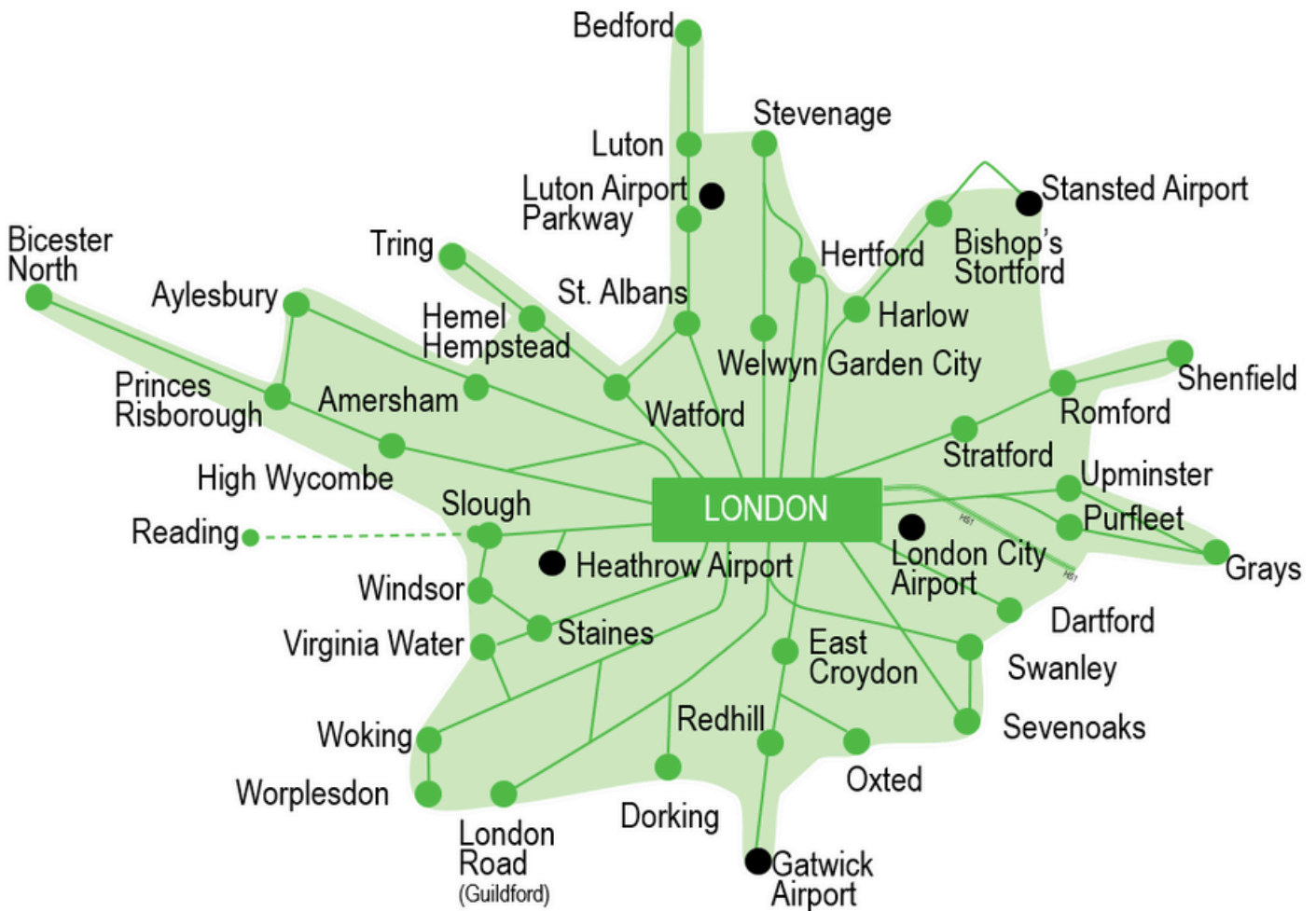
ANNUAL REVIEW 2023/24



What we do

London TravelWatch is the official transport watchdog for the capital. We are funded by the London Assembly and are accountable through the Transport Committee.

We speak up for all those who use the bus, Underground and rail services in and around the city as well as users of Dial-a-Ride, trams, taxis, cable cars and river transport. Our remit also covers matters related to the capital's principal road network.



(--- TfL Rail services to Reading)

Foreword from Chair, Tricia Hayes

I'm delighted to be able to celebrate a successful year at London TravelWatch, though deeply aware that, having joined near the end of the reporting year, I can't take very much of the credit for it.

Since my appointment as Chair in February 2024 it's been an absolute privilege to get to know the committed team at TravelWatch – Board and executive alike. This is an organisation with fantastic values, doing the very best job we can for people who travel in London. I've been so impressed to see what my predecessor Arthur Leathley, and our Chief Executive, Michael Roberts, have managed to achieve over the last year. I hope you enjoy reading about it in this short report.



I am determined that we should build on these achievements through 2024/25 and beyond. Good quality travel supports happy and successful lives. We all live in difficult times - the day to day lives of London's travelling public can be hard enough – let's continue to work together to keep travel off the list of things that makes them harder still.

Tricia Hayes

Foreword from Chief Executive, Michael Roberts

In an exceptional year, one achievement stood out. We and Transport Focus successfully objected to planned railway ticket office closures, through our roles in managing one of the largest public consultations of its kind.

We also published new insight aimed at influencing the work of transport providers, such as our well-received report “Out in London” on the personal security challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community when travelling in London.

In responding to over 30 substantive consultations, we commented on issues such as bus routes, penalty fares and accessible transport. Plans by Transport for London to withdraw the Day Travelcard were dropped following campaigning by us and others.



Our advocacy work saw a welcome increase in our profile. Visitors to our website trebled year-on-year, follower numbers grew on our 3 key social media platforms, and we secured coverage in London and national media outlets including The Times, The Guardian, The Daily Mail and The Mirror.

The year was also significant for our casework team. As well as dealing with nearly 2,000 appeals on behalf of London TravelWatch and Transport Focus, we successfully tendered for a new service provider to handle the initial contacts we get from the public.

We were deeply saddened by the death of our Deputy Chair, Alan Benson MBE; and we said farewell to Arthur Leathley, who completed an extended term as Chair since 2017. We are indebted to their leadership and very much look forward to building on their achievements with our new Chair, Tricia Hayes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Roberts". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a long, horizontal, slightly curved line that serves as a decorative underline.

Year at a glance



April - June 2023: We publish the findings from our survey of over 500 rail passengers about their views on Southeastern's December 2022 timetable. We also produce a scorecard ranking the capital's transport providers according to their approach to improving personal security for passengers.



July - September 2023: We submit a review of public transport provision in outer London at the request of the London Assembly Transport Committee. We write to Transport for London ahead of the expansion of ULEZ to outer London, seeking clarification among other things on the adequacy of financial support being offered.



October - December 2023: Train companies withdraw plans affecting ticket offices at 269 stations in our area, in light of our objections. Transport for London drops plans to end the Day Travelcard following pressure from us and other organisations. We launch our report on the personal security challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community when travelling in London.



January - March 2024: We write to Transport for London over our concerns about continued disruption to Central Line services. Tricia Hayes CB is confirmed as the new Chair of London TravelWatch, succeeding Arthur Leathley.

Key successes

It has been another busy year in transport and we continue to make a real difference for people travelling in and around London.

Ticket offices stay



Plans by train companies to close station ticket offices or change their opening hours sparked one of the largest public consultations of its kind seen in this country. There followed months of intense activity as we and our sister passenger watchdog Transport Focus carried out our legal responsibility to run the consultation.

We analysed nearly 230,000 responses from the public, almost universally negative, and we carefully considered the proposals for each of the 269 stations affected in the London area. Ticket office sales have been falling as a share of total sales, but people were concerned about what the plans meant for buying tickets in future, getting information at stations, and getting help to Disabled passengers when they need it.

Despite improving on their original proposals after we set out our interim findings, we concluded that the train companies had not gone far enough to show that the changes would improve things for passengers, so we and Transport Focus formally objected to all the proposals in October.

Within hours, the Secretary of State confirmed that the Department for Transport would be asking train companies to withdraw their proposals and not to proceed with the closures. Although the rail industry remains under pressure to cut costs, we will seek implementation of customer improvements suggested during the consultation.

Day Travelcard saved

In April, TfL announced plans to withdraw the popular Day Travelcard as a way of saving money, to help TfL meet the requirements of its funding agreement with Government. 15 million Day Travelcards were sold in 2022/23, allowing passengers unlimited travel for a day on most public transport services in Zones 1-6 on one ticket.



We campaigned with others against the proposal, including signing a joint open letter to the Mayor asking him to save the Travelcard. We argued that its withdrawal would reduce convenience and flexibility, as well as increasing costs, for many passengers, with disproportionate impact on Disabled people and the digitally excluded and disadvantaged.

In October, it was decided that Day Travelcards would be maintained after all, following a deal agreed between TfL, train operators and the Government. The decision secured the future for a popular ticket providing affordable and flexible travel around London for rail travellers from outside the capital, albeit at the cost of a one-off price increase on top of the subsequent annual fares rise.

LGBTQ+ personal security concerns highlighted

Following our 2022 report into personal security of the travelling public in London, we focused specifically on the extent of abuse and violence faced by the LGBTQ+ community in new report published in November.

“Out in London” reveals that one in five LGBTQ+ people say they had experienced hate crime on the transport network in the past year. Many are extra vigilant or change their behaviour due to concerns for their safety, and many lack confidence in the police.

The report makes recommendations for action by transport providers and policing authorities. It received good media coverage and a positive response from stakeholders: we are following up with relevant organisations to understand what they are doing to address the concerns identified in the report.



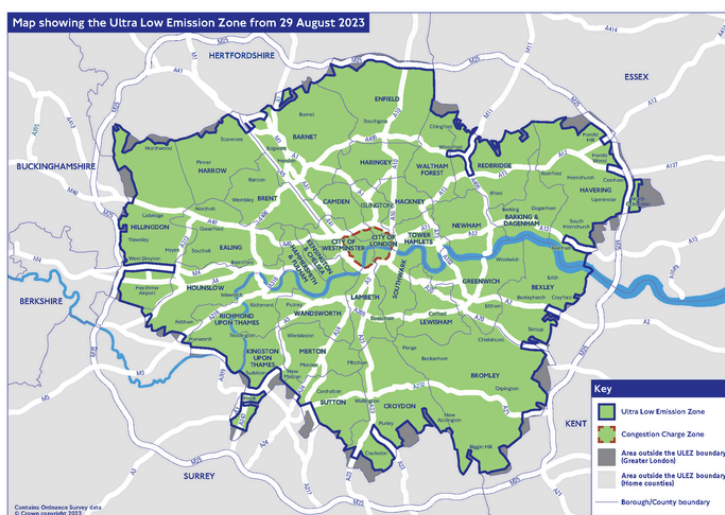
Transport operators ranked on personal security

June saw publication of our scorecard ranking London’s transport providers on what they are doing to improve personal security for passengers. We surveyed operators and looked at their answers against measures we believe are key, such as incident reporting, staff training, use of CCTV and publicising awareness campaigns.

The scorecard suggested that most transport providers take this issue very seriously, with Network Rail, LNER and TfL ranked highest. But we said there was still plenty of room for improvement across the sector, calling on the industry to share best practice. We plan to hold a summit in the coming year, bringing together operators and stakeholders to secure commitments to further action.

Raising outer London transport issues

The London Assembly Transport Committee asked us to carry out a review of public transport provision in outer London, which we submitted in July. The report identified the differences in levels of access to public transport between outer London and inner/central London, as well as within outer London itself; and highlighted post-Covid changes in the patterns of transport use.



The well-received report helped inform the Committee’s investigation into this topic: the Committee’s recommendations to the Mayor included calling for new orbital bus routes in outer London, in line with our position.

We also asked TfL to clarify their approach ahead of the expansion of ULEZ to outer London, which later came into effect. One issue we raised was whether the package of targeted financial support was adequate and how well it was being taken up by those who needed it most. In August, the Mayor announced an expansion of the scrappage scheme, so that grants would be available to all Londoners with a non-compliant car or motorcycle.

Speaking up for bus passengers

We continued to respond to TfL bus consultations ahead of planned changes. These included the proposals for Superloop routes, and in one case led to a decision by TfL not to re-route permanently the southbound 344 bus via London Bridge. In May, the work of our Bus Alliance came Runner Up in the Sheila McKechnie Foundation Award for Best Consumer Campaign 2023 – a welcome recognition of the Alliance’s impact to date in calling for more bus priority measures and a commitment by TfL to cut bus journey times.



Casework

During 2023/24, our casework team received 1,732 contacts from the public. In about 40% of these cases, we were able to deal with the matter quickly or direct people to the operator for an initial reply, as our focus is on handling appeals where a passenger has already complained to the service provider.

From the total number of contacts received, we handled 1,038 appeals raised by people travelling in London and the surrounding areas. The two biggest sets of issue looked into by the team were fares, retailing and refunds (232 appeals) and complaints handling (135 appeals).



London TravelWatch cannot compel a transport operator to provide us with a favourable outcome. Nevertheless, the casework team achieved the outcome the passenger was looking for in 50.5% of appeals. In a further 27% of appeals, the team achieved an improved outcome, albeit less than that requested by the passenger. We achieved financial awards totalling over £40,000 on behalf of passengers during the year.

We received 12 requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, all of which were dealt with within the statutory 20-working day period. London TravelWatch received 14 complaints about the casework service provision, 11 of which were referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The London TravelWatch casework team also provides an appeal service on behalf of its sister watchdog Transport Focus. Anonymised satisfaction surveys are sent to all appellants, which means that responses cannot be allocated to either organisation. 511 passengers responded to our survey in 2023/24, of which 70% provided positive feedback about the service they had received.

“

I am really impressed with the service your team provided. Our Caseworker was absolutely wonderful and kept in touch on a regular basis. Thanks to him, we had a full refund.

”

Looking ahead to 2024/25

Our business plan for the next 12 months, endorsed by the Transport Committee of the London Assembly, sets out eight priority topics for our work. The ultimate aim is to improve the experience of the travelling public in and around London, by building on existing workstreams and adding new areas of activity:

- Priority 1: more seamless journeys, by highlighting what needs to happen to improve the first and last mile of trips in the capital
- Priority 2: more accessible transport, by shining a light on the barriers faced by transport users with accessibility needs and how they can be reduced or removed
- Priority 3: greater TfL ambition in building customers' trust, by challenging TfL to set its sights higher and to have an effective strategy to support that
- Priority 4: better transport services, by spotlighting parts of the network not meeting passengers needs and calling for action to address that
- Priority 5: further action on inclusion, by securing action where we have already made recommendations for change, and identifying other areas of concern
- Priority 6: closer working with the Transport Committee, by making more of the combined resources and expertise of the Committee and London TravelWatch
- Priority 7: improved casework operations, by better use of feedback from appellants and analysis of complaint data
- Priority 8: improved London TravelWatch insight, by strengthening our understanding of Londoners' transport priorities and about future transport trends.

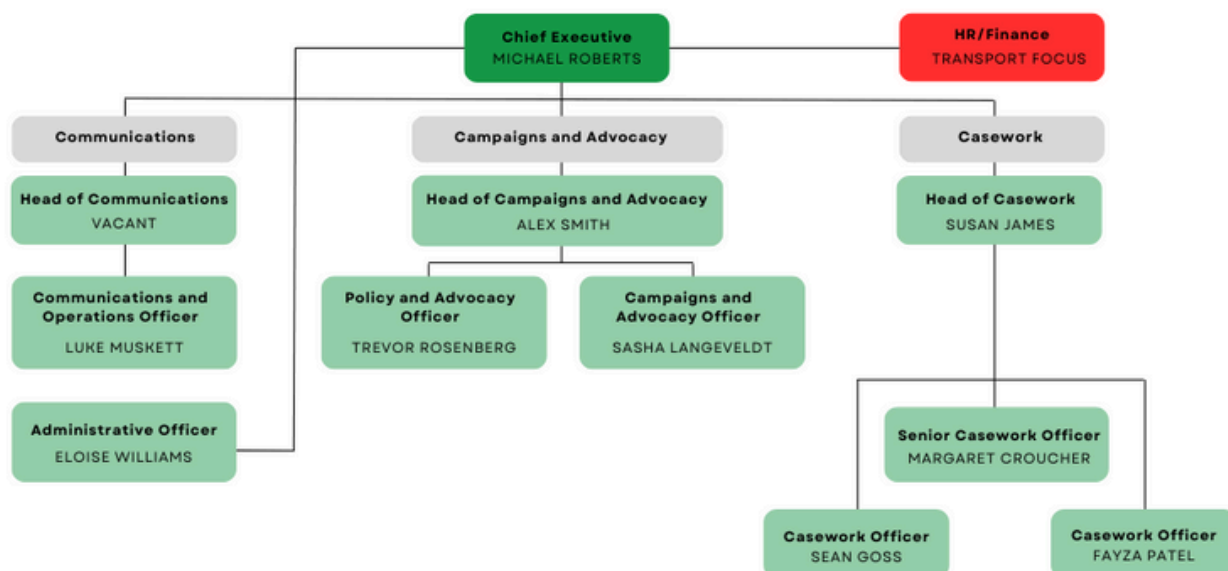
How we are funded

London TravelWatch is funded by the London Assembly in accordance with Schedule 19 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999. In 2023/24, our income amounted to £1.151 million and our expenditure was £1.118 million. We produce our full audited accounts every September and these are available on request.

Our Board

Chair	Arthur Leathley (to February 2024) Tricia Hayes (from February 2024)
Deputy Chair	Alan Benson (to December 2023)
Board Member	Priya Khullar
Board Member	Tiffany Lam
Board Member	Karen McArthur
Board Member	Laura Osborne
Board Member	Susan Stockwell

Our team (at 31 March 2024)



Alan Benson MBE

(1969 – 2023)



Alan served as our Deputy Chair from 2017 until his death in December 2023. Awarded an MBE in the 2022 New Year's Honours List for services to Public Transport for Disabled People, Alan was a tremendous advocate who brought passion and personality to his role on our Board. His determination to change things for the better and the progress he brought about as a result will remain an inspiration for all that we do at London TravelWatch.