

No ULEZ – London protest about Mayor Sadiq Khan's fund-raising new tax on Londoners

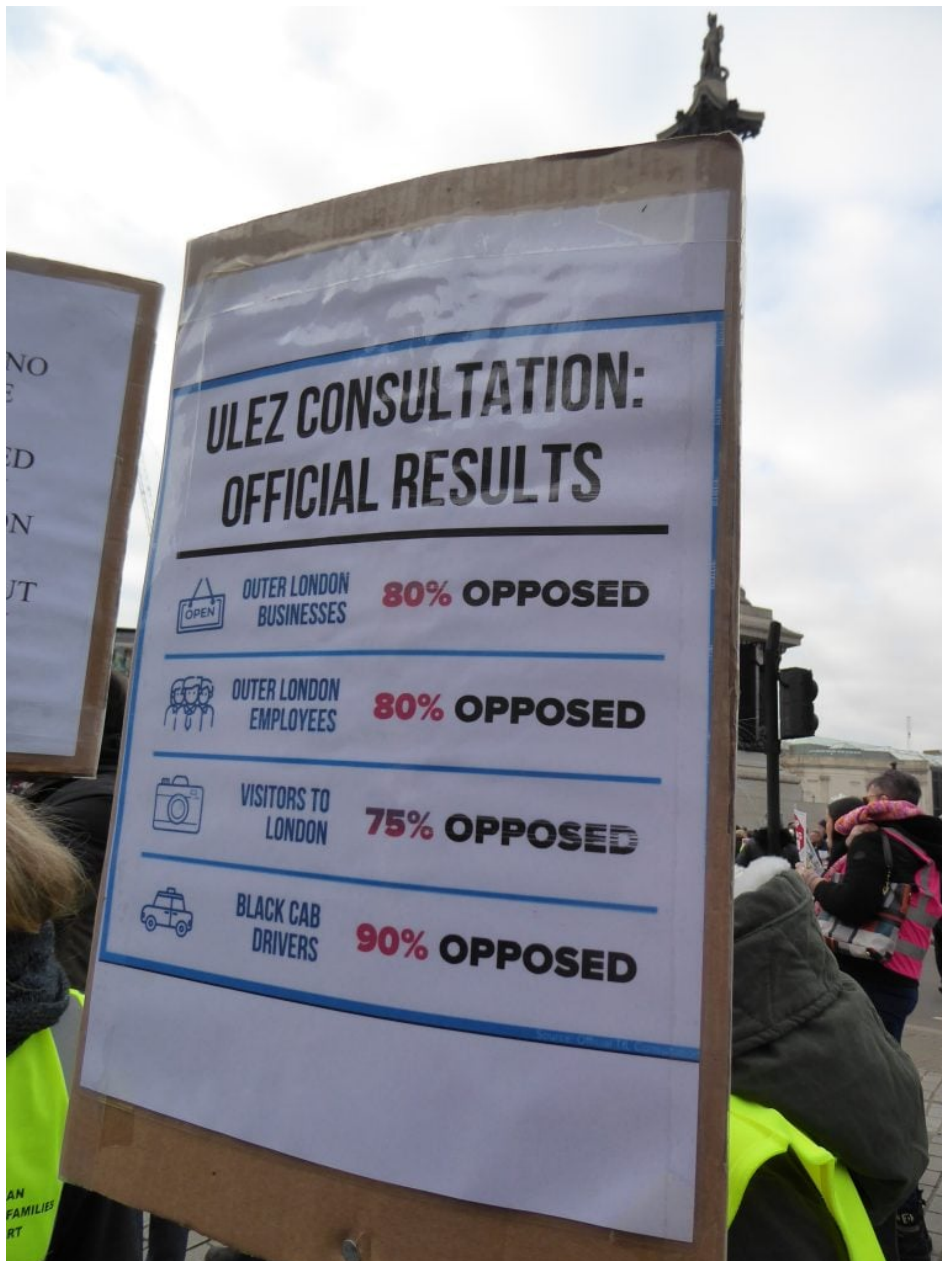
To Trafalgar Square in London to join the Action against ULEZ expansion gathering. As an official demonstration it was cancelled and Sadiq Khan refused the licence for it to take place in Trafalgar Square. Instead a group of like-minded people met to gather, celebrate birthdays and see the sights.



For our readers outside the UK (who probably have similar schemes suggested for their cities) ULEZ stands for 'Ultra

Low Emission Zone'. It already exists in inner London, along with a congestion charge to deter drivers from entering London in a car. Cars which are not compliant with a certain EU standard, which are mostly registered before 2006 (petrol) or 2015 (diesel) must pay £12.50 a day to drive anywhere within all London boroughs. Even if you live there. £12.50 to get heavy shopping from the supermarket. £12.50 to take [old Mum to her hospital](#) appointment. £12.50 to drive to work at the start of a night shift, and £12.50 to drive home at the end of the shift, because that is a new day. And night work isn't well served by public transport.

Ostensibly it is a measure to reduce pollution, give our children cleaner air and generally make living and walking around London nicer. As somebody who is old enough to remember the last of the notorious London Pea-souper [smogs \(December 1962\)](#) and the series of Clean Air Acts which changed the type of coal that could legally be burnt and reduced the dirt in the air the principle sounds appealing.



In reality it is a tax on the movement of Londoners, introduced to raise funds for Transport for London which is making a loss. Sadiq Khan held a 'consultation'. When the majority of those 'consulted' objected he ignored their views, saying it was a consultation, not a referendum. He [threw out 5000](#)

[votes](#) against the scheme from the members of a motoring organisation because they were worded in too similar a manner. He has also been censured for only really advertising the consultation on Tik-tok and some other youth orientated platforms, knowing that only young people would be in favour of the scheme as they are i) gullible (some, not all) and ii) live in central London where public transport is better and iii) can't afford a car yet.



Below, a Greater London Authority Heritage Warden (who knew such a post existed) was laying down the law to the holder of the Coffin of Democracy about where he could and could not go with his coffin. It's OK said the pallbearer I'm here to see the sights and some of my friends are celebrating a birthday.

Happy Birthday Karen







One of the other restrictions

ons on movement that is worrying people is the introduction (or proposals to introduce) into other cities (Canterbury, Cambridge and Oxford are the ones I know most about) of the '15 minute city' or sometimes 10 minute, or 20 minute. The principle being that people must content themselves with whatever is available in their 'zone' of the city, within 10/15/20 minutes walk, because access to other zones by car will be severely restricted. The restrictions vary, but general opinion is that this is at best a tax; at worst surveillance, a permanent lockdown, an end to freedom and privacy.

We estimated an attendance of several hundred, which for an event which was officially 'cancelled' wasn't bad but should have been better. It was hard to judge exact numbers as the

gathering went on for some time and people were leaving and arriving all the time.

I bumped into Steve Speakers Corner who I have not seen for ages and it was pleasant to catch up and swap impressions. Later Piers Corbyn turned up and spoke but we were on the wrong island.



The gatherers in front of us started to move forward. As I thought they were going to go down Whitehall to Downing Street we went quickly round the square towards Whitehall so as to see them walk down. But it was a move to get our unauthorised gathering out of the square and onto the public pavements of the perimeter. Therefore it became several medium sized groups on the traffic islands between road crossings.



Which made it effective to reach people crossing the road with leaflets, and also spread the message to the traffic passing. Several vehicles were marked up as being part of the protest. Plenty of vehicles beeped to show support. That tradesman's van is just the sort of small business that will be penalised.



Me being artistic while breaking for a cup of tea.



g were wearing hi-vis vests, in several colours, not just the yellow of the French Gilet Jaunes. But like the gilet jaunes, the hi-vis vest is worn by working men and women, who dig roads, sweep streets, work outdoors mending things. The very people who will be affected by this tax. David Lammy MP proved how out of touch with real life he is when he declared on Tuesday, during an interview on London Radio, that plumbers and window cleaners can take their equipment on [“Fantastic buses, fantastic tubes”](#). Of course they can.

The gathering was still going strong, spreading the word, a good three hours after we had arrived so we decided to leave them to it.

But on the pavement north edge of Trafalgar Square was a reminder of a truly awful, tyrannical regime, whose citizens are showing enormous courage in challenging. Which is why we must remember that our freedom isn't free; are ancestors paid

for it in blood, as are modern citizens of Iran.

Free Iran, Women, Life Freedom.



Photographs E Weatherwax London January 2023