

LONDON
TRAVELWATCH

Annual Review 2023



What we do

London TravelWatch is the official voice of London's travelling public. We are funded by the London Assembly and are accountable via the Transport Committee.

We speak up for all those who use bus, Underground and rail services in and around the capital 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.



Foreword from Chief Executive, Michael Roberts

As post-Covid travel patterns continue to establish themselves, London TravelWatch has been working hard on several fronts this year.

Alongside handling appeals where the public has complained to transport operators, the team has successfully argued against cuts and changes to public transport services, driven action to improve personal security for the travelling public, and secured improvements in passenger information.

The period since I joined London TravelWatch in January has been an exciting introduction to the range of issues and organisations with which we deal. I have begun engaging with senior figures among transport user groups and operators, and appeared before the London Assembly inquiries into public transport fares and the Mayor's aspirations for smart road user charging. It was also my pleasure to help launch our report into digital exclusion in London's transport, initiated under the leadership of my predecessor Emma Gibson.

I am grateful to Emma and interim Chief Executive Joanna Davidson for ensuring that our organisation is in good shape to tackle the challenges ahead. The pressures brought about by the cost of living crisis and the constraints on funding for transport in London, as well as ongoing uncertainty about what national Government's reform agenda for the railways may mean for passengers in the capital, are just some of the issues which will make our work as relevant and busy as ever in the year ahead.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Roberts". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Foreword from Chair, Arthur Leathley

London's transport system remains world class, but we cannot take it for granted.

Transport users face significant challenges in finding consistently affordable, accessible and reliable services, and financial pressures will only impose more pressures and constraints.

That is why London TravelWatch remains a crucial independent voice representing the millions of people using London's transport system.

I am proud that we continue to stand up for users, especially those who do not have a strong voice, or whose concerns are overlooked.

We have a small specialist team, and the wide-ranging contents of this annual review underline their ability to use research evidence and casework from users to drive improvement in

many aspects of transport in London. There remains much work to do, but I am confident that London TravelWatch is well equipped to tackle the key issues and continue to press for meaningful transport changes and protect the world-leading service London needs.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A Leathley'.

Year at a glance



April - June 2022: Strikes on national rail services begin after balloting of trade union members. We provide feedback to train operators on their customer communications so they can better publicise the service disruption to passengers and provide alternative travel information.



July - September 2022: Eurostar switches off their phonelines due to the sheer volume of customer contacts they are receiving. We speak out against this policy publicly. We support transport operators with on-the-ground feedback to make sure customer information is accurate during the mourning period for Queen Elizabeth II.



October - December 2022: Eurostar switches their customer phonelines back on after our lobbying. TfL announces it will not go ahead with proposed bus cuts - something on which we had campaigned earlier in the year. The Home Office supports criminalising public sexual harassment (a key policy recommendation from our personal security report).



January - March 2023: TfL launches new campaign around bystander behaviour on public transport, featuring many of our recommendations. Southeastern pledges to bring back more direct Charing Cross services on the Bexleyheath line after lobbying by us and others. We publish our report on digital exclusion, '*Left behind Londoners*'.

Campaign successes 2022/23

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

Reversing the bus cuts proposals

We were pleased that the Mayor's proposal to make cuts to London's bus network (potentially involving 1 in 5 night bus passengers having to change in the middle of the night) were dropped. We strongly opposed the cuts in our response to the Mayor's consultation. We pushed back against making some 93,000 journeys more difficult by cutting existing routes in a way that meant passengers would have to change their bus for onward travel. We specifically objected to detailed changes affecting 15 bus routes and none of these are now going ahead. Additionally, the vast majority of night services have also been protected.

Our Bus Alliance has grown in strength this year following its launch during the pandemic. Campaign and advocacy groups, bus operators, trade unions, London borough representatives and London Assembly Members work collaboratively to improve bus services in the capital. This joint work is vital as it puts the bus firmly on the agenda with decision-makers. We know that more Londoners use the bus than any other type of public transport. It is especially important to those on lower incomes, women, children, Disabled people and ethnic minority Londoners. And one bus can take up to 75 cars off the road, helping improve air quality and fight climate change.



Active bystander campaign



TfL launched a high-profile communications campaign based on our research and recommendations on personal security. The publicity encourages a culture where passengers are 'active bystanders' suggesting how to intervene safely and make a stand against sexual harassment or hate crime. The campaign launched in January at King's Cross station with support from the Metropolitan Police, British Transport Police and City of London Police as well as anti-harassment campaigners and representatives from TfL.

In light of the Casey review of the Metropolitan Police, we will work closely alongside industry colleagues to make sure these are alternative channels for people to report incidents. This is particularly important

for these people who do not feel comfortable reporting directly to the police. Our research shows that there is a level of distrust particularly prevalent amongst those groups who are most likely to experience feeling unsafe. For many women, people of colour and LGBT+ people, the feeling of not being taken seriously, or a belief that certain incidents are just not worth reporting, present a real barrier.

Making sexual harassment a crime

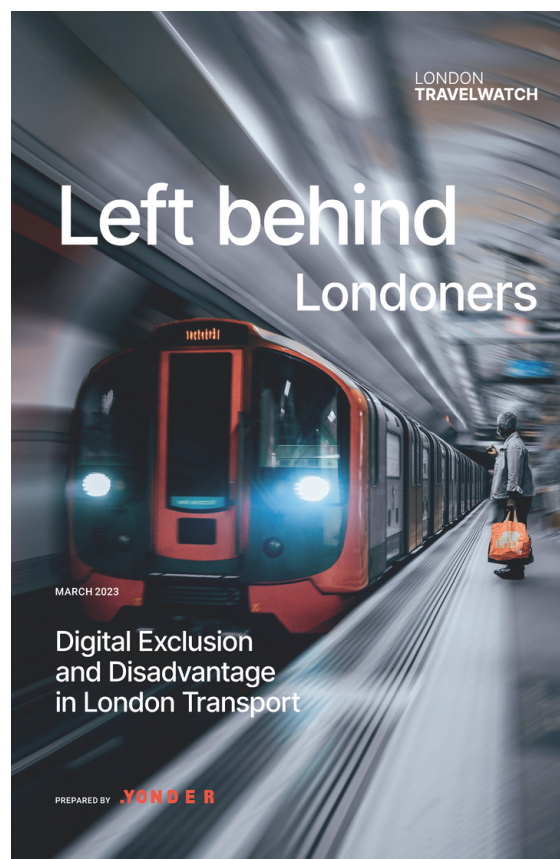
In December, the Home Office announced their support for criminalising public sexual harassment. This was one of 28 recommendations included in our personal security report. This is an important piece of legislation that will give courts the power to prosecute those who harass others in public.

Building on this, we have started work on a further piece of research around personal security. We expect to publish the findings, with a particular focus on the LGBT+ community, in summer 2023.

Highlighting digital exclusion

We led a call together with influential organisations such as Age UK London, Transport For All, Guide Dogs and Digital Poverty Alliance for operators to make transport more inclusive. This follows our report on digital exclusion where we made nine specific policy recommendations around making sure no Londoner is left behind by a ‘digital-first’ approach.

1 in 5 Londoners
say they have
paid more for
travel because
they can't buy
tickets online



“A one-size-fits-all approach by transport providers does not work for a large section of London’s population. That can’t be right and it’s why we’re calling on decision makers to provide a system that is accessible, affordable and inclusive.”

Michael Roberts

We will push on with our advocacy work around digital exclusion in the year ahead.

Find out more at:
www.londontravelwatch.org.uk

Elizabeth line opens

The Elizabeth line opened to much fanfare (after lengthy project delays and budget overspend) in May 2022. It was an overnight ‘game changer’ in terms of making London more connected. At the time of writing this report, one in every six UK rail journeys are made on the Elizabeth line. After the line opened, we reviewed the customer information in place at stations and fed back directly to TfL. A number of changes were made as a result, including new bus signage at Liverpool Street, helping those passengers who interchange at the station for onward travel around London. We also drew attention to issues with lift signage and other station information issues across the route and these are under review.



We will continue to advocate for passengers who use the Elizabeth line on issues such as accessibility, service reliability and providing clear customer information.

E-scooters in London

Our joint webinar with Centre for London on e-scooters was well received and surfaced many of the issues around making micromobility safe for everyone. The event was attended by parliamentarians, assembly members, e-scooter campaigners, Disabled people’s organisations and safety campaigners. Since the webinar, an e-scooter trial across London has been extended by TfL and we will continue to feed back on behalf of the travelling public in general.



State Funeral for Her Majesty the Queen

We were sad to hear the news about Queen Elizabeth II's death. We knew just what an important occasion the Lying-in-State would be for the country and so we were keen to support transport operators with constructive advice and feedback to get things right.

We carried out 'mystery shopping' around how well visitors were being informed by TfL and national rail companies about information such as where queues started or the locations of toilet facilities. This resulted in significant improvements in making sure that frontline staff had the most up to date information at stations. We also used this opportunity to share some research with TfL that Transport Focus conducted into people's travelling intentions ahead of the funeral.



Casework

During 2022/23 our casework team dealt with 2,147 written and telephone enquiries and complaints. We were able to deal with about half of these quickly or pass them on to the operator for an initial reply, as our focus is on handling appeals where the passenger has already complained to the service operator.

We investigated 1,030 appeals from members of the public travelling in London and the surrounding areas. The vast majority of cases concerned refunds, performance and complaint handling by the transport providers.

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 55% of appeals. In a further 34% of appeals the team achieved an improved outcome, albeit less than that requested by the passenger.

London TravelWatch received seven complaints about the casework service provision. Two were settled to the passenger's satisfaction and five were signposted to the Local Government Ombudsman.

We received five requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which were all dealt with within the statutory 20-working-day time period.

The London TravelWatch casework function also provides an appeal service on behalf of its sister company Transport Focus. Anonymised satisfaction surveys are sent to all appellants which means that responses cannot be allocated to either organisation. However, of the 266 appellants who responded to our survey request over the last 12 months, 84% indicated that they were satisfied with the service we have provided.



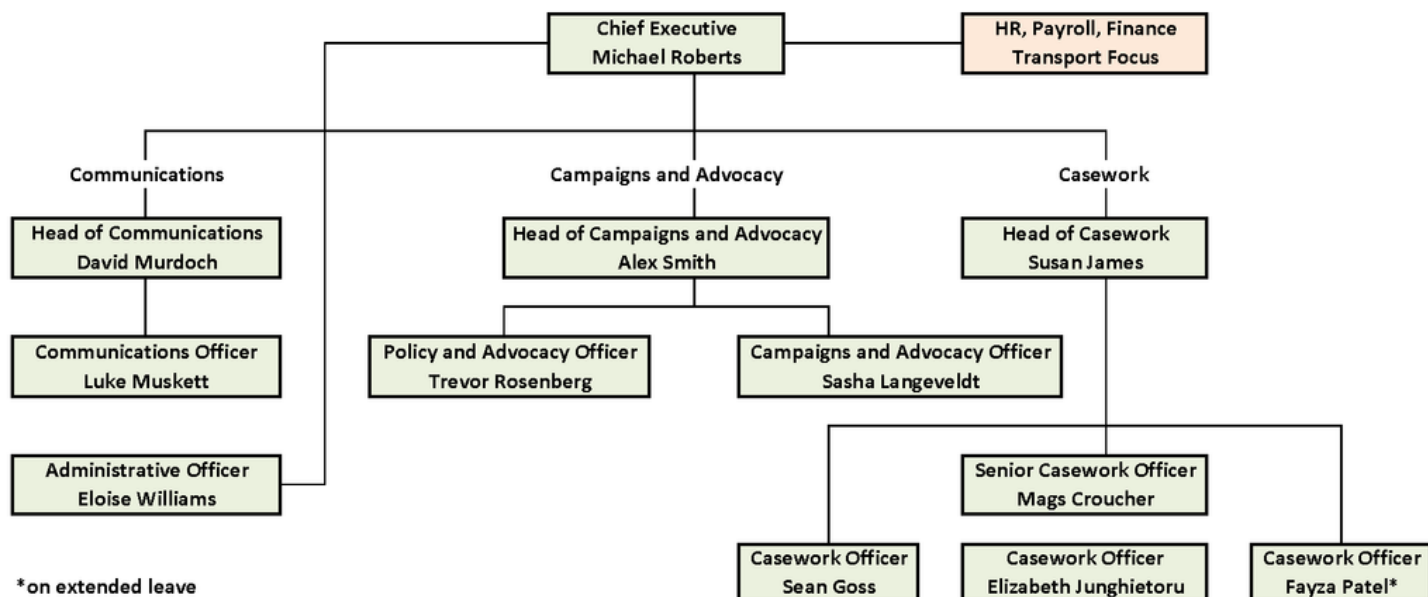
How we are funded

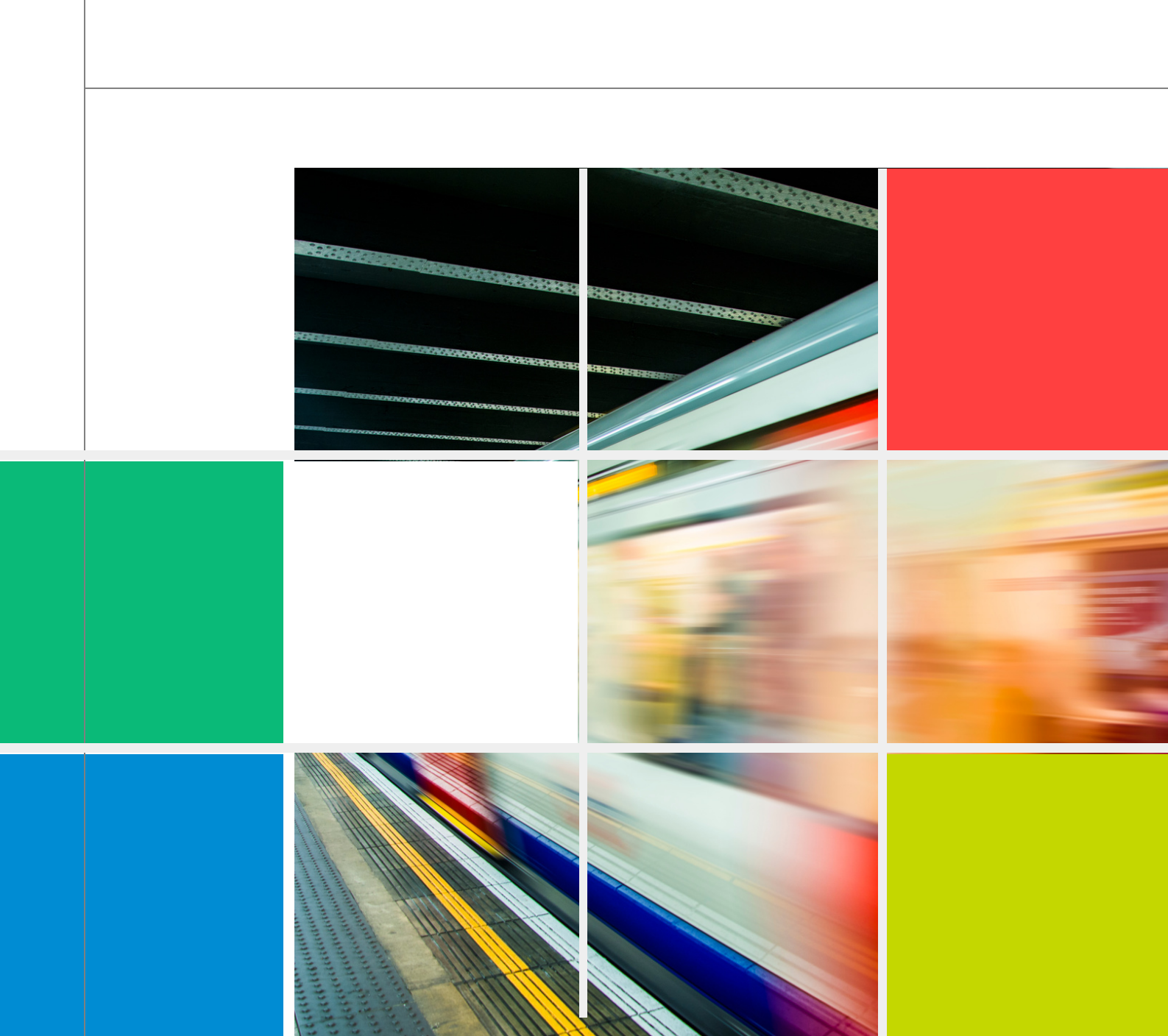
London TravelWatch is funded by the London Assembly in accordance with Schedule 19 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999. In 2022/23, our income amounted to £1.11 million and our expenditure was £1.07 million. We produce our full audited accounts every September and these are available on request.

Our Board

Chair	Arthur Leathley
Deputy Chair	Alan Benson
Board Member	Priya Khullar
Board Member	Tiffany Lam
Board Member	Karen McArthur
Board Member	Laura Osborne
Board Member	Susan Stockwell

Our Staff (at 31 March 2023)





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www.londontravelwatch.org.uk