Dear Boris,

Parliamentary inquiry on Air Quality

During the recent smogs in London you were quoted as saying that the air “seemed perfectly fine” to you. The Environmental Audit Committee is undertaking a follow-up inquiry on air pollution, and I am writing to invite you to appear before the Committee to give evidence on the pollution and the action being taken to address it.

Our inquiry has been prompted by a number of recent developments, including the European Commission decision in February to start financial penalty action against the UK, Public Health England’s recent data on increased mortality from air pollution and of course the recent smogs in London.

We intend to revisit the recommendations from our 2011 report on Air Quality, to identify the state of progress. That means examining, for example, the role of local authorities — including the GLA, the evidence base they have for developing policies and the support they get in tackling air pollution, as well as how any European Commission fines might fall on them. It also means looking at the progress made on Low Emissions Zones and imposing vehicle emissions limits, as well as any more direct measures to suppress particulates and control polluting gases.

London has particular challenges of course in tackling air pollution because of its traffic. On the Government’s reckoning London will not meet the EU standard for nitrogen dioxide until 2025. It would be essential for our inquiry to look at the particular circumstances that London faces, what it is doing, and what more it could do. I would therefore be grateful if you would agree to come to give evidence to us, in late June or early July. Please let me know if you are able to do so.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

All Best Wishes

Joan Walley MP
Chair, Environmental Audit Committee