Baroness Vere

Chair, Hammersmith Bridge Task Force

Department for Transport

Great Minster House

33 Horseferry Road

London SW1P 4DR

 2 October 2020

Dear Baroness Vere

**Hammersmith Bridge**

I write as a resident affected by the closure of Hammersmith Bridge. You will be aware of the immense distress and hardship suffered by thousands of people in the local community, in particular since the bridge closed to pedestrians on the 13th August 2020.

The situation is truly bleak. Children cannot get to school safely. Elderly people cannot reach essential services including medical care. Ambulances and hospital patients are struggling to reach Charing Cross Hospital. Many local businesses are facing closure.

Public transport alternatives are utterly inadequate, particularly in the light of CoVid capacity restrictions, and are hampered by the widespread gridlock caused by the bridge closure. Instead of a short walk to school or the doctor's surgery, residents now face hour-long waits at bus stops, further hours in traffic or dangerous cycle journeys along unlit, flooded towpaths. And horrifyingly, all of these issues will get even worse when the clocks change on the 25th October.

Unfortunately since the formation of the Task Force, there has been no reassuring news at all. The statement released that speaks only of a ferry service that will not be up and running until next year is a crushing disappointment suggests that the government do not regard this situation as the emergency that is truly is. The despair, disillusionment and anger felt in response to this statement after weeks of waiting cannot be overstated.

In light of the above I would implore you to prioritise the following:

**1) Providing an immediate interim ferry crossing -** please issue a temporary ferry contract while the tender process for the ferry service is completed. A ferry needs to be available from the 25th October. We cannot wait until next year. There are operators standing by to provide this.

**2) Making sure children can get to school safely** - Please work with the local councils to put in place lighting and security along the riverside routes that are now essential to children and commuters. If this is not done we will face an inevitable crime, injury and safeguarding crisis.

**3) Improving Bus Services** - Please work with TFL to increase local bus services. In particular the 533 frequency (only 4 per hour) is inadequate and leads to hour-long wait times as well as over-crowded buses when drivers take pity and let more than 14 people board.

I understand that this is a complex problem; resolution requires strong leadership and governmental commitment to funding for this critical transport route. I hope that I can rely on you to deliver this.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,