



INTERVIEW

LEE KUAN YEW
WORLD CITY @
PRIZE Network

LONDON
2026 LAUREATE

IN CONVERSATION WITH
SADIQ KHAN

Building a Fairer, Greener, Safer, and More Prosperous London

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, shares his plans to make London a more liveable city.



| Image: Greater London Authority

|| Delivering long-term projects requires a clear vision and unshakeable determination. ||

You have served as the Mayor of London across three terms, giving you a unique perspective on the city's trajectory. How have you seen London evolve during your tenure, and how has your approach to governance adapted in response to emerging trends and opportunities?

As Mayor of London for ten years, I have had a unique opportunity to deliver truly transformative projects which will define the path our city takes in the decades to come. The Elizabeth Line, for example, has revolutionised our transport network. Now as the United Kingdom's busiest railway service, it is bringing prosperity and opportunity to communities who had been left out of London's success story for far too long. Last year, the Ultra Low Emission Zone—the world's first and largest urban clean air zone—helped us get the levels of toxic nitrogen dioxide in London's air below legal limits for the first time, almost 200 years before the experts said we would.

Delivering these kinds of long-term projects required a clear vision and unshakeable determination—especially as, in the last decade, my team and I have also had to confront an unprecedented series of external shocks. From Brexit to the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, London has faced no end of challenges. In the depths of each crisis, however, we have found an opportunity to change our city for the better.

|| Building a fairer city means supporting those who have been left behind by the pace of economic change or locked out of the opportunities it offers.



When the coronavirus pandemic shone a light on London's glaring inequalities, we created the London Anchor Institutions Network to unite public and private sector leaders around a shared mission to rebuild a fairer London for everyone. As prices surged in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we launched a cost of living hub to help Londoners access the support they need. As populists tried to divide the capital's communities, we launched 'Loved and Wanted'—a campaign to remind Londoners that, no matter the colour of their skin or the God they worship, they are welcome in our city.

Today, the rapid pace of technological progress is creating extraordinary opportunities for cities like London, alongside worrying new risks. That is why I have launched a new AI and Jobs Taskforce, which will investigate the impact artificial intelligence (AI) could have on London's workforce and help us to understand how we can best prepare Londoners to seize the benefits. Rather than passively awaiting the future technology will bring, in London we are actively shaping it in the interests of the people we serve.

What are some initiatives London has implemented to ensure that vulnerable communities are well-supported?

When I was first elected Mayor, I promised to build a fairer, greener, safer, and more prosperous London for everyone—a city where no one was left behind. I have dedicated the last decade to doing just that.

I believe in a city where your life chances are not determined by the circumstances of your birth. As Mayor, I have provided more than 120 million free school meals for children in our state primary schools, ensuring that none of the capital's kids suffer the gnawing ache of hunger in the classroom. I have also set up a Violence Reduction Unit, which has provided over 550,000 positive opportunities to prevent young Londoners from being caught up in violence and exploitation. Today, London's teenage homicide rate has fallen to its lowest level in three decades.

Building a fairer city also means supporting those who have been left behind by the pace of economic change or locked out of the opportunities it offers. I have provided free training for more than a million people, and I recently launched a new Inclusive Talent Strategy to ensure that every Londoner has the skills they need to thrive in the decades to come. We have also built record numbers of council and affordable homes, providing a lifeline for families across London, and helped over 20,000 homeless people off the streets.

Supporting vulnerable communities also means defending those who are targeted because of the colour of their skin, the God they worship, or the people they love. Londoners know that diversity is a strength to be celebrated, not a weakness to be hidden. That is why, as Mayor, I have always sought to stand up for London's minority communities and champion the extraordinary contributions they make to public life. As leaders, we must build bridges, not walls—because the only way to beat division and fear is with unity and hope.



More than 120 million free school meals were provided for children in London's state primary schools.
Image: Greater London Authority

London has invested significantly in accessibility improvements, including major projects like the Elizabeth Line and the upcoming pedestrianisation of Oxford Street. How have these transport and urban design initiatives enhanced liveability across the city?

Investment in transport infrastructure does not just make it easier to get from A to B. It can completely reshape a city, connecting people with new opportunities and catalysing economic growth.

I have made overhauling London's transport network one of my top priorities. Since its launch in May 2022, the Elizabeth Line has carried over 600 million passengers, moving up to 800,000 people every day. An architectural marvel, it is both beautiful and accessible. It has also transformed the prospects of the places it serves—within 1 km of Elizabeth Line stations, more than 70,000 homes have received planning permission and over 125,000 jobs have been created.



24

The 'This is Oxford Street' event showcased what a reimagined and pedestrianised Oxford Street could offer.
Image: Greater London Authority

Extraordinary though it is, the Elizabeth Line is just one part of London's transport revolution. We have also extended the Northern Line and the Overground, with plans to extend the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) to Thamesmead and turbocharge the construction of 25,000 homes. At the same time, we have delivered the Superloop, radically improving bus travel in outer London, and the Night Tube.

The pedestrianisation of Oxford Street marks the next step in our mission to build a better London for everyone. Together, we are turning Britain's most famous high street into a genuinely world-class public space for Londoners and visitors alike.

Given that these initiatives often cut across multiple sectors and stakeholder groups, there may be unintended consequences. How does the city manage these competing interests and trade-offs?

I want London to be a fairer, greener, safer, and more prosperous city for everyone. When you are delivering bold, ambitious change, disagreement is to be expected. But my priority has always been bringing as many people with me as I possibly can.



Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.
Image: Jason Hawkes

Take housing, for example. If we want to tackle London's housing crisis and set our city up for success in the decades to come, we have got to build more of the homes that Londoners desperately need. At the same time, however, we must also safeguard the green space that millions of Londoners cherish.

Access to nature should be a right, not a privilege—particularly in a city where one in five households have no access to a garden. That is why—alongside building record numbers of council and affordable homes—we have also planted 640,000 trees, created or improved 2,000 football pitches' worth of green space, and delivered rewilding projects to bring back species like beavers and white storks to London for the first time in centuries.

In London, our approach to planning plays a crucial role in getting this balance right. For example, our policies now ensure that all new developments include community facilities, green spaces, and cultural programming—a key part of our commitment to creating inclusive and liveable communities for everyone.

||
This award is a testament to the creativity, resilience, and determination of all the talented Londoners who make our city the modern, multicultural metropolis it is today.
 ||

London was announced as the Laureate of the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize 2026. Can you share what this recognition means for the city and how you see the value in learning from other cities within the Network?

I was born and raised in London, and I have lived here all my life. My journey, from a council estate kid to Mayor, would not have been possible anywhere else. It is for this reason that, for me, and for millions of Londoners like me, winning the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize is such an extraordinary honour.

This award is a testament to the creativity, resilience, and determination of all the talented Londoners who make our city the modern, multicultural metropolis it is today. It also speaks to the enduring power of what I call the London promise: the idea that, if you work hard here, you get a helping hand—and you can achieve anything you want.

Lastly, this prize is also a tribute to all the amazing things we have achieved together over the last decade, from tackling toxic air pollution and transforming transport to supporting young Londoners and standing up for our values we share.

A place where English and over 300 languages are spoken, London is one of the most diverse cities on Earth. Our success as a global hub for talent, investment, and culture is inseparable from our openness to the world and all the opportunities it offers.

As Mayor, I try to embody that openness by building bridges with cities across the world. The Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize Network gives us a chance to do just that, learning from trailblazing cities who are taking on some of the toughest challenges we face.

From navigating the age of AI to confronting the climate crisis, cities like London are standing face to face with the forces that are reshaping our world. By working together, we have a unique opportunity to build a better future for everyone.

What does success and liveability look like for London over the next decade, and what should residents and visitors be most excited about regarding the city's future?

I am an optimist by nature—I would not be in politics unless I believed in our ability to change the world for the better. Ten years into the job, I still believe that we can make the greatest city in the world even greater.

London faces no shortage of challenges in the decade ahead. But, with a clear vision—and with Londoners behind us—we also have bold and ambitious plans to overcome them. Having secured record funding from the Government, we will be able to build more of the affordable homes that Londoners deserve. And we are investing £30 million to support a good late-night youth club in every borough, providing young Londoners with safe spaces where they can discover new opportunities.



London will turn Oxford Street into a world-class, pedestrianised public space.
 Image: Greater London Authority

As we push ahead with our project to turn Oxford Street into a world-class, pedestrianised public space, we are also cleaning up our rivers and waterways so that every Londoner can enjoy them. At the same time, we are moving full speed ahead with our plan to improve London's transport network as part of our goal for 80% of journeys to be made on foot, by bike or via public transport by 2041. That includes extending the DLR to Thamesmead and investing in world-class walking and cycling infrastructure.

Finally, preparing our city for the future also means helping Londoners harness the potential of transformative technologies like AI. Through the London Growth Plan, we are championing our fastest-growing industries with the aim of boosting our productivity and helping to create 150,000 good jobs by 2028.

My mission as Mayor has been the same since the day I was first elected: building a fairer, greener, safer, and more prosperous London for everyone. Today, I'm more determined than ever to deliver. 📍