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Fuel Duty:

I appreciate the concerns people have about petrol and diesel prices. The cost of fuel is a pressing and urgent part of the wider cost-of-living crisis.

It is for this reason that at the start of the year I supported calls for the Government to rule out a fuel duty rise in this year's Budget. If it had gone ahead with its planned duty hike in March, it would have represented the biggest increase in petrol prices on record. With so many households relying on a car to get to work, I believe this would have been devastating. I therefore welcome that having previously dismissed these calls – and indeed criticised those making them – the Chancellor eventually listened and froze fuel duty for a further year.

On future levels of fuel duty, the Government says it keeps all taxes, including fuel duty, under review and I can assure constituents that I will continue to monitor this issue.

On unfair petrol prices, I agree that the Government has been too slow to act on this issue. It is well over a year since the Competition and Markets Authority was asked to look into unfair fuel prices, while in Northern Ireland the Consumer Council published a fuel price checker in September 2020, which has helped to keep fuel costs below those in England. I believe we need to set up a watchdog to monitor fuel prices and name and shame those companies' overcharging motorists, saving drivers up to around £50 a year.

Finally, on traffic management schemes and tackling air pollution, I believe it is essential that we consider a range of options for achieving clean air in a proportionate way. I do not want people to breathe dirty air, nor to see the introduction of schemes that disproportionately impact people in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. Motorists need to be supported in the shift to cheaper electric vehicles, making them affordable and accessible to all, with charging facilities everywhere. As we move to cleaner, cheaper alternatives for fossil fuels, people must not be left to bear the transition costs on their own.

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