

UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Earth Day during the Covid-19 global health emergency as UK deaths reach 18,100; 885 infected in Newham and Muslims in Newham prepare for a 'Lockdown Ramadan'

FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ

22 APRIL 2020

Dear Newham Resident,

On this Earth Day, marking the 50th year that the call for environmental reforms has never been more urgent; I wanted to start my update with a pledge that despite this unprecedented time of challenge dealing with the devastating impact of coronavirus – and the health emergency that it has engendered – we will use this opportunity to highlight the importance of accelerating global demands to save our planet.

In Newham, the lockdown measures are having a dramatic effect on air quality in the borough: our Stratford monitoring stations indicate that pollution from transport emissions (NO₂) has halved. This is good news for anyone struggling with Coronavirus symptoms, as pollution is known to increase risks associated with respiratory illness. Let's ensure that one legacy of this awful time is learning the lessons about transport use into the post-Covid period.

Due the Covid-19, the two most significant international conferences on new biodiversity and climate change targets have been postponed; with COP15 and COP26 to be rescheduled. Once they are re-booted, all of us will need to play a role in pushing for their adoption.

As we continue to live in 'Lockdown Britain', I encourage all of you to spend some time joining the 72-hour livestream bringing Earth Day activism online here: <https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2020/>. It's an inspiring expression of the global movement we are part of – all united in saving our planet and the future of humanity.

Preserving life in response to Covid-19 remains on the top of the global agenda, on the day that the director general of the World Health Organization, warned that complacency is the greatest danger facing countries in the fight against the pandemic. So far, some 179,778 people are known to have died from coronavirus, with 2.5 million people infected.

In the UK, the number of deaths from Covid-19 recorded in hospitals has now reached 18,100 people, including the 763 people dying in the last 24-hours. In London, 22,352 people are infected, and 885 of them are from Newham. My thoughts and prayers for the victims, and their loved ones; and I wish all those infected a speedy recovery.

We also heard today that some 'very disruptive' social distancing measures will be required at least to the end of this year, to prevent new outbreaks of coronavirus. The government's chief medical officer, Professor Chris Whitty, has said that we have to be realistic about the 'incredibly small' chance of a vaccine (or treatments) being

ready for use this year, meaning that we are in this for the long haul because coronavirus is not going to be eradicated.

There's also been more scrutiny on the government's failures to meet testing targets and delivering the vital supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) for our frontline workers in today's first 'virtual' session of Parliament.

Supplies of PPE remain an on-going feature of an unfolding national scandal, and lessons will have to be learnt, but in Newham, I'm pleased to say we are managing to source the equipment our staff need, as a result of officers hard work and the generosity of local groups, and businesses. I would like to particularly thank Mr Yin-Kwong Yau and the Newham Chinese Association who have donated some 5,000 facemasks.

Across the borough, I know thousands of you are preparing for the start of Ramadan, the most spiritual month in the Islamic year over the coming days. It's a month when Muslims would normally come together with friends and family to break their fasts after sundown through 'Iftar' gatherings and pray together in Mosques.

This year, Ramadan will be very different, as those observing will be observing lockdown restrictions for their safety and that of others. We've recorded a special Ramadan message with Imam Sheikh Yunus Dudhwala, who is the Head of Chaplaincy at Barts Health NHS Trust, which you can view here: <https://youtu.be/xBJVTKUpQBs>.

So to all our Muslim residents preparing to observe the Holy month of Ramadan, on behalf of all Councillors and the Council, I wish you a peaceful month ahead. And to everyone in this wonderful and amazing borough of ours, keep up the good work, keep socially isolating and keep safe.

We are all in this together as a united community, and while we may not feel it right now, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rokhsana Fiaz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rokhsana Fiaz
Mayor of Newham

**People at the Heart
of Everything We Do**