

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Email: andrew@andrewdismore.org.uk
Web: www.andrewdismore.org.uk
Twitter: @Andrew_Dismore
Telephone: 020 7983 5529

LONDON ASSEMBLY LABOUR



Andrew Dismore AM

Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
House of Commons
Westminster
London W1 0AA

Date: 11 June 2020

Dear Mr Hancock,

I write following comments on the NHS contact tracing app made at the London Assembly Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee today (11 June 2020).

When asked about the progress of the app, Fiona Twycross, London's Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience, told me that the app is not expected until the Autumn.¹

The Deputy Mayor said: "I understand that its due to come out in the Autumn... when we get an app that works, I think we'd all support it... we have raised concerns that the app, although it might work on an island, may not work [in London]."

You had previously stated that this app would be ready alongside the rest of the contact tracing programme, by mid-May.² This was then pushed back to June, and now according to the Deputy Mayor is not scheduled until quite late in the year.

The Deputy Mayor went on to say that testing the app on the Isle of Wight had left unresolved obstacles to operations in urban areas, such as Bluetooth confusion between residents on different floors of tower blocks.

Ms Twycross said: "It's reliant on Bluetooth; you need to get that right, we can all imagine what would happen if you have a tower block when you're reliant on Bluetooth, you might get inaccurate readings."

While no one could disagree with the need to have an app that works, I am concerned that such predictable issues seem to have been missed, and not

¹ FREP Committee webcast, GLA, 11 June 2020 <https://www.london.gov.uk/fire-resilience-and-emergency-planning-committee-2020-06-11>

² Ministers consider NHS contact-tracing app rethink, BBC, 11 June 2020 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-52995881>

addressed by the trial in an area of the UK notable for its differences to the kind of places most people live and work.

With this in mind, I ask you to respond to this letter setting out the current state of the NHS contact tracing app, the problems (such as this) developers are addressing, its current launch timeline, and what steps you are taking to address the lack of capacity in the contact tracing system created by these delays.

Londoners need assurance that the Government is on top of this issue, when the contact-tracing app was initially presented as a critical bit of the fight back against coronavirus. London has a world-beating tech sector. I look forward to your reply setting out how the Government will provide the best kit possible to protect the nation's health.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Andrew Dismore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrew Dismore AM

Labour London Assembly Member for Barnet and Camden