# TfL commissioner faces backlash over unfounded allegations against Tube graffiti volunteers



The Transport for London (TfL) commissioner, Andy Lord, has ignited a fierce backlash after suggesting that anti-graffiti campaigners on the London Underground might be responsible for spray-painting graffiti on trains only to clean it off again on camera. This claim, which Mr Lord said was under investigation, has been labelled by critics as a damaging smear against volunteers actively working to combat vandalism on the Tube.

Earlier this summer, a volunteer group led by Joe Reeve, founder of the policy group Looking for Growth, gained significant public attention and praise for their efforts cleaning graffiti from the Bakerloo line. Their videos went viral after they began scrubbing paint-covered train carriages, drawing commendations from passengers and TfL train operators alike. The campaigners wore high-visibility jackets emblazoned with the slogan "Doing what Sadiq Khant," a clear criticism of Mayor Sadiq Khan's handling of the issue.

However, in a statement to the London Assembly, Mr Lord claimed he had “evidence of people creating graffiti and then removing it,” which was part of a broader TfL investigation. This allegation was met with immediate scepticism. A Freedom of Information request revealed that TfL holds no recorded evidence supporting this claim, deepening criticism of the commissioner’s comments. Keith Prince, the Conservative transport spokesman at City Hall, demanded Mr Lord either substantiate his claim or apologise to the volunteers. Former mayoral candidate and Tory assembly member Susan Hall called the commissioner’s statement “disgraceful,” insisting that if there is no evidence, Mr Lord should apologise for smearing a group dedicated to tackling Tube vandalism.

Mr Reeve, who regularly uses the Bakerloo line, shared his frustration with the perceived inaction from authorities. Speaking to The Standard, he described witnessing passengers bypassing barriers, followed by seeing graffiti-covered carriages daily, which compelled him to act. “I love London, and I think it should be the best city in the world,” he said. Despite frustration with the current mayor, he and his team have received strong support from train drivers and the wider community for their voluntary clean-up efforts.

TfL has confirmed that graffiti removal remains a significant ongoing challenge, particularly on the Bakerloo and Central lines, where around 3,000 instances of graffiti are removed weekly. Mr Lord has previously highlighted the scale of the problem, stating cleaners remove an act of graffiti approximately every 11 minutes across the Tube fleet. Official figures show that over 23,000 pieces of graffiti have been removed from the network in just the past two months, with offensive graffiti prioritised for immediate removal due to its impact on passenger experience.

The controversy has also attracted wider media attention. GB News host Tom Harwood, who has taken part in Tube graffiti clean-ups himself, expressed surprise and dismay at Mr Lord's implication that those fighting vandalism could be responsible for it. Similarly, specialist rail transport outlets and political commentators have criticised the commissioner’s remarks as unfounded and damaging to volunteer efforts.

A TfL spokesperson clarified that Mr Lord’s comments referred to verbal information he received and ongoing internal work related to TfL’s graffiti reduction strategy. This strategy encompasses prevention and tackling graffiti vandalism across London’s transport network, but no public evidence has been forthcoming to support suspicion of campaigners’ involvement in creating graffiti.

This incident shines a spotlight on the tension between public frustration over rising graffiti vandalism and official responses, which many feels fall short of addressing the root causes or supporting grassroots efforts. As the debate continues, campaigners like Joe Reeve remain focused on their mission to clean and improve the Tube environment, calling for greater institutional backing rather than accusations.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15034795/TfL-boss-accused-smearing-Tube-anti-graffiti-campaigners-claiming-spray-painting-trains-clean-camera.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://order-order.com/2025/07/04/khan-and-tfl-spark-outrage-with-attacks-on-tube-graffiti-cleaners/), [[6]](https://www.railtech.com/all/2025/07/23/tfl-boss-suggests-anti-graffiti-vigilantes-could-be-tagging-trains-themselves/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15034795/TfL-boss-accused-smearing-Tube-anti-graffiti-campaigners-claiming-spray-painting-trains-clean-camera.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.gbnews.com/news/tom-harwood-tfl-chief-graffiti-cleanup-tubes), [[3]](https://order-order.com/2025/07/03/khans-tfl-chief-says-tube-graffiti-cleaners-are-the-ones-spraying-graffiti/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15034795/TfL-boss-accused-smearing-Tube-anti-graffiti-campaigners-claiming-spray-painting-trains-clean-camera.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62j12wp00jo)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15034795/TfL-boss-accused-smearing-Tube-anti-graffiti-campaigners-claiming-spray-painting-trains-clean-camera.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15034795/TfL-boss-accused-smearing-Tube-anti-graffiti-campaigners-claiming-spray-painting-trains-clean-camera.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://www.inkl.com/news/tube-cleaned-every-11-minutes-tfl-boss-reveals-full-extent-of-graffiti-epidemic-on-london-underground), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62j12wp00jo)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.gbnews.com/news/tom-harwood-tfl-chief-graffiti-cleanup-tubes), [[4]](https://order-order.com/2025/07/04/khan-and-tfl-spark-outrage-with-attacks-on-tube-graffiti-cleaners/), [[6]](https://www.railtech.com/all/2025/07/23/tfl-boss-suggests-anti-graffiti-vigilantes-could-be-tagging-trains-themselves/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15034795/TfL-boss-accused-smearing-Tube-anti-graffiti-campaigners-claiming-spray-painting-trains-clean-camera.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15034795/TfL-boss-accused-smearing-Tube-anti-graffiti-campaigners-claiming-spray-painting-trains-clean-camera.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gbnews.com/news/tom-harwood-tfl-chief-graffiti-cleanup-tubes> - GB News host Tom Harwood has criticised Transport for London (TfL) Commissioner Andy Lord after Lord suggested that individuals cleaning graffiti on the London Underground might be responsible for creating it. Lord stated that there is evidence of people creating graffiti and then removing it, which is under investigation. Harwood, who has been involved in cleaning graffiti from Tube trains, expressed surprise at the accusation. ([gbnews.com](https://www.gbnews.com/news/tom-harwood-tfl-chief-graffiti-cleanup-tubes?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://order-order.com/2025/07/03/khans-tfl-chief-says-tube-graffiti-cleaners-are-the-ones-spraying-graffiti/> - Guido Fawkes reports that TfL Commissioner Andy Lord has suggested that anti-graffiti campaigners might be responsible for the graffiti they are cleaning. Lord mentioned evidence of people creating graffiti and then removing it, which is being investigated. This statement has sparked outrage among campaigners and the public. ([order-order.com](https://order-order.com/2025/07/03/khans-tfl-chief-says-tube-graffiti-cleaners-are-the-ones-spraying-graffiti/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://order-order.com/2025/07/04/khan-and-tfl-spark-outrage-with-attacks-on-tube-graffiti-cleaners/> - Guido Fawkes reports on the backlash against TfL Commissioner Andy Lord's comments suggesting that anti-graffiti campaigners might be responsible for the graffiti they are cleaning. Lord's statement has been met with disbelief and criticism, with calls for an apology and clarification. ([order-order.com](https://order-order.com/2025/07/04/khan-and-tfl-spark-outrage-with-attacks-on-tube-graffiti-cleaners/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62j12wp00jo> - BBC News reports on the significant increase in graffiti on the Central and Bakerloo lines of the London Underground. Passengers have reported seeing more graffiti, prompting complaints to Transport for London (TfL). TfL is working to remove graffiti as quickly as possible, with offensive graffiti removed as a matter of urgency. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62j12wp00jo?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.railtech.com/all/2025/07/23/tfl-boss-suggests-anti-graffiti-vigilantes-could-be-tagging-trains-themselves/> - RailTech reports that TfL Commissioner Andy Lord has suggested that anti-graffiti campaigners might be responsible for the graffiti they are cleaning. Lord mentioned evidence of people creating graffiti and then removing it, which is under investigation. This statement has been met with criticism and disbelief. ([railtech.com](https://www.railtech.com/all/2025/07/23/tfl-boss-suggests-anti-graffiti-vigilantes-could-be-tagging-trains-themselves/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.inkl.com/news/tube-cleaned-every-11-minutes-tfl-boss-reveals-full-extent-of-graffiti-epidemic-on-london-underground> - Inkl reports on the significant increase in graffiti on the London Underground, with over 23,000 pieces of graffiti removed in the last two months. TfL Commissioner Andy Lord stated that cleaners are removing one act of graffiti every 11 minutes across the Tube fleet. The Bakerloo and Central lines have been particularly affected. ([inkl.com](https://www.inkl.com/news/tube-cleaned-every-11-minutes-tfl-boss-reveals-full-extent-of-graffiti-epidemic-on-london-underground?utm_source=openai))