

61st ANNUAL REPORT

December 2022



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ASSOCIATION



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A festive advertisement for Harrods hampers. The background is a deep red, decorated with green holly leaves and red berries at the top. In the center, several wicker hampers of various sizes are arranged, some with black cross-shaped patterns woven into the front. They are surrounded by numerous red gift boxes, many of which are tied with dark red ribbons in bows. The scene is set on a light-colored wooden floor. In the bottom right corner, a small red gift box sits on a larger red box, with a small round clock and a ribbon nearby.

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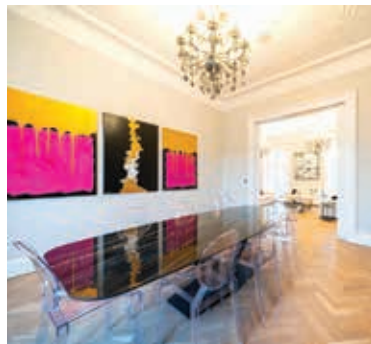
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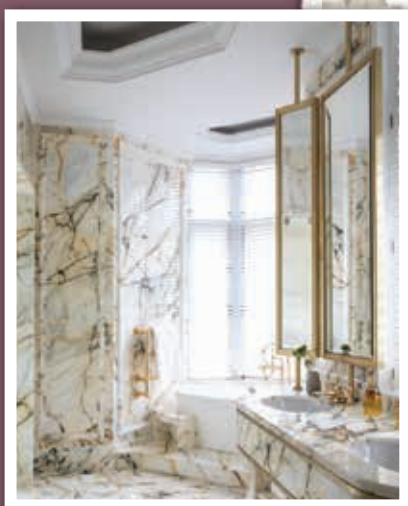
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THE CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II died at 6.30pm on 8 September 2022 aged 96. It was hard not to be moved by the sonorous drum beat of Handel's funeral march and the sight of 140 Naval ratings hauling Queen Elizabeth's gun carriage mounted coffin up Constitution Hill to the reception point underneath the wings of the bronze quadriga atop Wellington Arch. It was then that our late Queen, of blessed and glorious memory, glided along Hyde Park's South Carriage Drive to Windsor and eternity. Crowds five deep on the park roadside tossed floral tributes into the cortège but nothing could halt its relentless motion. People want to be here, intoned

a commentator, because they do not know where else to be. And so it was that stability, duty and devotion to service slipped quietly on to the next generation.

Life follows death as foretold at the Accession Ceremony: Long Live King Charles III. My personal recollection, prompted by all we saw that day, was the memory of

playing football some 66 years earlier with the then Prince Charles at the Duke of York's sports ground in the King's Road under the watchful eye of the redoubtable Colonel Townsend. After the game we would normally walk back to Hill House in crocodile but on this occasion our minder asked for those who wanted a lift back to school in the official, black Ford Zodiac to raise their hand. Shyness struggled with boldness for one of a few comfortable seats in the royal limousine; and I am pleased to recall that boldness triumphed!



Cllr. Hamza Taouzzale, Lord Mayor of Westminster, reads the Proclamation of King Charles III on the steps of Old Marylebone Town Hall.

Now for matters temporal. The Nammos planning appeal Hearing took place on 12 October in front of a planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities. The Hearing, convened at the offices of Westminster City Council at 10am, ran until 6pm that evening. Dan Kolinsky KC, Landmark Chambers and Alan Divall, Walsingham Planning represented the Knightsbridge Association. We are grateful for their help in opposing the appellant's statement of case and articulating the KA's position persuasively throughout the Hearing. Residents attended in-person and contributed oral evidence while others participated on-line. The Inspector visited the site before and after the Hearing.

We received the Inspector's decision on 3 November and were disappointed to learn that the principal Appeal 'A' was upheld, and planning permission granted for the residential flats and the creation of a terrace at the rear looking onto Montpelier Place. This is an unwelcome decision. By the time this report reaches you, you will have received the full Appeal decision notice and our supporting analysis following a debrief with our professional team. While the Neighbourhood Plan did provide the KA with its best line of defence when challenging the re-development of 13-17 Montpelier Street, it is disappointing that the Plan's provisions protecting residential amenity were so easily overridden.

Many councils have encouraged roll-out of Neighbourhood Plans to make communities believe their concerns are recognised and mitigated. The KA's experience shows, however, that it is an expensive way of managing expectations considering the enormous human effort in setting up a Neighbourhood Forum, organising a referendum and negotiating a Plan; in addition to costs faced by residents seeking redress who rightly believe the Plan is there to protect them.

The KA attended the members Breakfast Launch of the Knightsbridge Partnership ('KP') held in the Bulgari ballroom on 20 October. The KP's speed of roll-out so far is impressive and we were heartened by comments made by event speakers to the effect that *'we must be proud of our area'* and *'the area exemplifies both beauty and competitiveness'* and *'we need to work harder on cross-border issues'* and *'partnership by name and partnership by nature'* and, finally, *'there is a constant need to re-invest in and redefine Knightsbridge'*. The Partnership's security patrols are welcomed by both residents and businesses while council pledges to collaborate on cross-border issues provides the best way of overcoming commercial waste collection and fly-tipping issues that have bedevilled Brompton Road for years. The KA sits as an observer on the KP board. An article on the Partnership's growing scope of work appears on page 31.

As foretold in last year's Annual Report, the tussle between heritage and innovation continued in 2022 most noticeably in the realm of broadband roll-out. During the year several schemes to improve broadband connectivity and / or beautify streets came to life, galvanised by enthusiasm from individual residents. High-speed fibre broadband from Cloud 9 looks, at time of writing, to be going live around New Year in Ennismore Mews, pushed through by technology savvy residents frustrated by the reluctance of providers to dig up cobbled streets. And, just in time for this report, I can reveal their perseverance has indeed been crowned by winning first place in Lurot Brand's 2022 Mews in Bloom competition for urban mews gardens that, last year, went to Bathurst Mews. Congratulations!

The latter part of 2022 has been interspersed with national rail and London Tube strikes. While this causes huge personal inconvenience and increased pollution from inevitable traffic snarl-ups, it is nonetheless a good

moment to reflect on the positive impact the Piccadilly Line's arrival in 1906 has had on neighbourhood amenity; and I commend the article on page 45 celebrating the arrival of this vital artery.

We extend our congratulations to Felicity Buchan MP for Kensington upon her appointment as a Minister in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Her responsibilities include the private rented sector, homelessness, rough sleeping, and Homes for Ukraine. We wish her every success in the new post.

I extend a particular note of thanks to our Treasurer for setting up and managing our Nammos Appeal Fund in addition to her normal duties as Treasurer. Thanks also go to other team members for their contributions throughout the year as reflected under Appreciations on page 27.

This has been a particularly active year for the Association, and in many respects a watershed one, as it has revealed the limitations of residential interests in the face of commercial resolve notwithstanding the best made plans in defence of residential amenity.

It leaves me to wish you and your families a Happy Christmas and festive season; and good health in the year to come.

Melville Haggard
Chairman

Press Association / Danny Lawson



THE QUEEN'S FUNERAL



SOME LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

HYDE PARK BARRACKS

Lt Col Tom Armitage,
Commanding Officer, HCMR

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment had always known that one day we would have to deliver a State Funeral for our Colonel-in-Chief and a plan was in place for this known as Operation LONDON BRIDGE. Unsurprisingly focus on this operation increased in recent years but it was still a profound shock to all of us when it was called into action.

As soon as news broke we immediately sprang into action – recalling soldiers from their other taskings, dispatching lorries to collect our horses from grass rest and detailing off troops to task.

Our first focus was shoeing all returning horses and getting them into parade-ready condition, but attention was also on preparing our troops for their first duties. The procession from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Hall was led by a marching detachment of The Life Guards with swords reversed (below) and with the Blues and Royals bringing up the rear. On arrival at Westminster Hall the Household Cavalry, as the Army's

senior regiments, had the privilege of mounting the first vigil for the Lying-in-State (above) – a huge honour for all involved..

After another five days of intensive preparations we were fully prepared to deliver what was almost certainly the most significant parade in the living memory of the Regiment. The London funeral procession from Westminster Abbey to the Wellington Arch had the Sovereign's Standard of The Life Guards and two mounted

Divisions on parade and in Windsor the Sovereign's Standard of the Blues and Royals and two mounted Divisions formed part of the procession up the Long Walk to Windsor Castle. Some of the final images from the Windsor procession

were of the Household Cavalry Step Lining Party at St. George's Chapel (left).

Almost in a flash this incredibly intense period of ceremonial activity was over and we were left to reflect with pride on the support we were able to provide at an historic moment in the life of our nation. The Household Cavalry's long standing connection with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II will always be a source of tremendous pride, and her steadfast service and leadership a source of inspiration to us all.



THE ROYAL PARKS

Nina Kapur

The eyes of the world were also on the Royal Parks as St James's Park, Green Park, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens were principal areas for viewing the funeral procession for Queen Elizabeth II. Teams from across The Royal Parks pulled together and worked around the clock sweeping, removing street furniture, managing waste and carrying out landscaping works to ensure the parks looked their best and were ready to host such a momentous event.



Floral tributes in Green Park were later taken by the Queen's favourite Shire Horses to the Kensington Gardens leaf pen for composting.



gardens started to be cleared, with the help of 200 volunteers and (above) the Queen's favourite Shire Horses. All the organic material was separated out and transported to the Kensington Gardens leaf pen for composting. The compost goes back into projects across the Royal Parks, including the iconic flower beds in front of Buckingham Palace. Over 400 Paddington Bears and other toys were collected from the floral tribute sites and will be cleaned and donated to Barnardo's children's charity, of which Her Majesty The Queen Consort is Patron.



The parks welcomed a total of 215,000 people on the day of the funeral to the public viewing areas, which included giant screens positioned across the Hyde Park Parade Ground. Temporary catering units, welfare facilities and toilets were brought in across the parks and along the processional route to accommodate the significant numbers coming into central London.

Crowds gather in Hyde Park to watch the funeral on the big screen.

The parks were busy throughout the 10-day mourning period and beyond, with significant crowds coming to lay flowers and view the floral tribute gardens which were set up in The Green Park and Hyde Park. In Green Park alone, a hectare of land was filled with flowers, cards and artefacts. A week after the funeral, the tribute



PLANNING AND CONSERVATION

Carol Seymour-Newton

The Association has been involved in two Planning Appeals during the year. Although different in scale, each is of great significance for Knightsbridge.

The one which has taken up the majority of this committee's time, has been that on the former premises of Montpeliano restaurant in Montpelier Street, referred to in the Chairman's Review.

The major construction sites along the Knightsbridge thoroughfare and down Brompton Road are ready for occupation with international retailers competing for space and the new tube entrance in Brompton Road finally open.

Sloane Street is getting a facelift and there are great hopes that the Knightsbridge Partnership will at last be able to clean up Brompton Road and rescue it from the downward spiral of recent years.

SOUTH KENSINGTON STATION



Looking north from Onslow Gardens – existing – showing the Victorian character of the area



Looking north from Onslow Gardens – proposed

The Knightsbridge Association, together with the Chelsea Society, the South Kensington and Queensgate Residents Association and other groups will be represented by the Brompton Association and four groups immediately to the south of the station have come together and will also make their views known and support the Council. The aim is to persuade the Inspector that the proposed development is

seriously damaging to the historic character of South Kensington. The Kensington Society will emphasise the failure to provide step-free access

Meanwhile, RBKC is doing what it can to protect the listed Arcade designed by George Sherrin. The shop at the north east

corner sought to draw attention to itself a few months ago by painting its exterior bright orange. This ugly and inappropriate paint has gone all over the listed shop front including over the fine bronze detailing that characterises the surviving original shopfronts like this one. As this goes to press, it is encouraging to learn that the RBKC Conservation and Design Team under Sarah Buckingham's leadership is enforcing against this unauthorised and unfortunate change.

The Appeal

In the last newsletter we reported that the appeal, submitted by developers Native Land and TfL, against RBKC's refusal of planning permission and listed building consent would be held in November. Shortly after our newsletter went to press, the Planning Inspectorate - whose job it is to organise appeal hearings – announced the date was being changed and that the public inquiry

was being postponed until January. It is now scheduled to open on January 18th and is estimated to last eleven days.

RBKC has assured local groups that it will defend its decision to refuse permission with vigour. The Council has instructed Douglas Edwards KC to present their case and Michael Lowndes of Lichfields will present evidence on heritage, design and townscape. Aaron Lau, principal planning officer at RBKC, will also give evidence.

THE ESTATES

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ESTATE

The northern end of the Knightsbridge Estate has undergone significant change over the last year with the redevelopment entering the final stages of its delivery. The Estate welcomed high profile tenants Burberry and Apple to the Knightsbridge Estate as part of its ongoing redevelopment to transform the site and create seven brand new flagship stores on Sloane Street and Brompton Road.

Chelsfield, the development managers delivering the project for owners The Olayan Group, celebrated the completion of the shell and core works of the development at the beginning of the year. Tenants have been secured for four of the six floors of the vibrant new workspace and these are currently being fitted out.

The final phase of the work continues with the fit-out of the 33 rental apartments, which overlook a new central courtyard garden and are due to be completed in the first quarter of next year.

The new entrance to Knightsbridge tube station (below) on Brompton Road



opened in October improving access to the tube. The pavement on Brompton Road and Sloane Street has been widened to help ease pedestrian congestion and improve the streetscape along the retail frontages.

In addition, Hooper's Court (below) has been remodelled to create a beautiful walkway linking Brompton Road and Basil Street. London

Underground are progressing fit-out works for the step-free access to the tube from Hooper's Court, due to open in October 2023.

For further information, please contact 0808 287 9554 or construction@cascadecommunications.co.uk

55-91 KNIGHTSBRIDGE



The KA understands that marketing of the retail units on this long Knightsbridge frontage is well under way with one already signed up for and several others under offer. It will be welcome to see the shops filling up bringing more life back to the street after such a long time in gestation.

As with so many plans in recent times, the proposed public realm works to the William Street landscape have been delayed. APML

Estates – owner of 55-91 – hoped to commence enabling works and surveys in November but were awaiting sign-off of the scheme from WCC. This would allow the street to reopen with new paving and planting. Meanwhile the entrance to William Mews is almost constantly blocked by illegal parking. The Councils need to take action.

OTHER NEWS

THE PENINSULA

Autumn saw work on the new Peninsula London Hotel and Residences on Hyde Park Corner progressing at a cracking pace.

Outer scaffolding, fascia boards and two cranes came down, to reveal the gracious Portland-stone façade which is now 98% complete. Inside the fit-out of 190 guest rooms, 25 private residences, restaurants and bars is well underway. The Peninsula Lobby, which will welcome guests and play host to the hotel brand's much-loved afternoon teas, is expected to be completed first. In November, four auspicious stone lions arrived to guard the doors at the front and rear of the hotel, signifying the countdown to opening its doors in early 2023.

Sitting between three Royal Parks, The Peninsula London is surrounded by green spaces, and this is reflected in the building itself. Its inner courtyard has two 120-year old trees, the oldest Japanese Maples in Europe, and has now been planted with living walls of wisteria and vines.



Aerial view of The Peninsula and Hyde Park Corner



THE BERKELEY

The exterior of the new building at 33-39 Knightsbridge has now been completed and as reported in the Autumn Newsletter, the internal fit-out is underway with completion anticipated by May 2023.

The Bishop at The Berkeley



Each season the Hotel transforms two areas of private forecourt on the south elevation for dining al fresco. This winter it features a themed pop-up pub – The Bishop at The Berkeley, the name inspired by the mitre hat that originally graced The Berkeley logo. It is a traditional pub setting, divided into two areas – one side is the bar, complete with beer taps, old church pews and bar stools, and the other a cosy dining area.

ROYAL ALBERT HALL

A date has yet to be announced for the installation and unveiling of the four statues in the niches on the north and south porches of the Hall, commissioned as part of



the Hall's 150th celebrations. The late Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh, in bronze, will face the steps leading down to Prince Consort Road while to the north, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in stone, will face Kensington Gore and the Albert Memorial.

The lifesize artworks will effectively 'complete' the building by filling the empty niches of its North Porch – which have lain empty since 1871 – and its South Porch, added in 2003.

IMPERIAL COLLEGE

In October, ALERT, the monumental 6 metre high, 67 ton sculpture by Antony Gormley was officially 'unveiled' by Professor Hugh Brady, the President of Imperial College, and Imperial alumnus Brahmil Vasudevan and his wife, sponsors of the new piece. Standing in Imperial College Road the sculpture has been created using large blocks of weathering steel, 'it evokes the human form and asks us to reassess the relation between the body and space'. Over time, the steel will naturally form a stable oxide coating and an organic patina.



Thomas Angus, Imperial College London

Antony Gormley said: 'Through the conversion of anatomy into an architectural construction I want to re-assess the relation between body and space. Balancing on the balls of the feet while squatting on its haunches and surveying the world around it the attitude of this sculpture is alive, alert and awake.'

Professor Brady added 'South Kensington is one of the world's most celebrated districts and the fusion of art and science has always been at its core. We are grateful to the sponsors for giving Imperial the opportunity to be the setting for a striking new artwork by one of the UK's foremost living artists'.

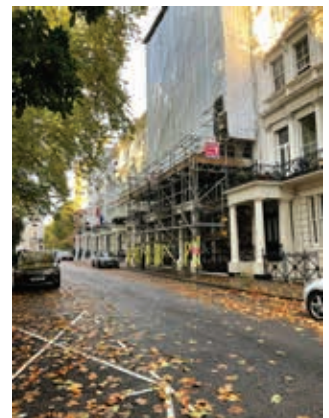
RUTLAND GATE

2-8 Rutland Gate

This substantial 45-bedroom property at the top of Rutland Gate is reported to be on the market once more. Bought in January 2020 for £210million by a wealthy Chinese family, the 5,782sq metre home has planning permission for demolition and replacement of the top two floors and complete refurbishment of the interior. It is estimated that this would cost in the region of £100million and that the property would need at least 20 full time staff to run it. There are reputed to be only a handful of families in the world who could not only afford to buy the property but carry out the refurbishment.

31-32 Rutland Gate

Finally, after persistent badgering from the KA, WCC took enforcement action over these two dilapidated listed buildings on the east side of Rutland Gate. Just



before the enforcement notice took effect, workmen appeared, scaffolding was erected and work of some sort started. Enforcement officers have since inspected the interior of the buildings and have reported that 'works are ongoing in relation to the live planning permission and listed building consent'. This included various works in association with the use of 31 and 32 Rutland Gate as two single family dwellings and the use of 58-59 Montpelier Walk, to the rear, as a single family dwelling. Some works have been carried out which do not currently have permission and further warning letters will be issued by the Council. The owner indicated that he intends to replace the entire roof covering due to its poor condition.

There is still a long way to go.

RUTLAND GATE (continued)

Upper Garden

This neglected garden, which is in private ownership, has been more or less an eyesore since the seventies. Unfortunately, the freehold is separate to the surrounding buildings, and has changed hands several times over the years with various owners thinking they could obtain planning permission to build on it – there was originally a gardener's lodge within the garden. Over time various residents and the KA have organised tidy up operations, but nothing on a permanent basis, and then there was the horrifying accident when a branch from one of the trees fell on and killed a passer-by.

Recently the mystery owner has undertaken tidying up works and a planning application has been submitted to the Council to carry out works to the trees.

LANCELOT PLACE

For so long a building site!

At last construction work started on the five new town houses – nos 3–11 (odd) earlier in the year. We understand work on the formation of the substructure continued to the end of 2022. The new year will see the erection of the steel frames and the date for completion is set for 2024.



The two buildings at the top of the street, nos. 15 Lancelot Place and 1 Trevor Walk have yet to emerge from behind the scaffolding and it is hoped they will be completed during 2023.

LICENSING

Paul Meitner – Chairman

OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

2021 saw a continuation of the return to pre lockdown levels of activity and this was reflected in the number of licensing applications. In last year's report I referred to an application by Sheesh (70 Brompton Road, formerly Top Shop). Thankfully this was refused by Westminster City Council, the applicant did not appeal the refusal and the building has now reverted to retail.

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea ('RBKC') issued an updated Licensing Policy last year, which is due to run until 2026 - although there is a precedent for updates being made before then. One of our concerns was that there were no 'core hours' for either licensed activities or the placing of tables and chairs on pavements. This meant that we and other concerned parties have to rely on the core grounds set out in the Licensing Act 2003 to lodge objections. These are the

Prevention of Crime and Disorder, Public Safety, Prevention of Public Nuisance and the Protection of Children from harm.

RBKC also issued an update on the outcome of its consultations on Al Fresco Dining. 70% of the responses were in favour and so the outdoor dining policy was extended, once the legislation had ended in September, to run on annual basis, but during British Summertime only.

During the year we collaborated with other residents' associations (RA's) and shared ideas with them and kept a close eye on pronouncements from both WCC and RBKC.

The increasing use of TENs (Temporary Event Notices), bypassing the usual review and approval processes and allowing applicants to 'opt' out of core hour constraints, is causing us concern. Only the Police and Council Environmental Health team may object. McDonald's

has made liberal use of TENs in recent years so they can stay open all night during major events in Central London. Some years ago, McDonald's tried to secure permanent 24-hour opening, beginning the process with a series of TENs and then arguing that as these did not result in complaints a permanent licence on the same terms should be granted.

This year McDonald's resumed their use of TENs, beginning with the first two weekends in August, with late night opening till 5am. Further TENs may follow, reinforcing a culture of late-night fast food in Brompton Road. The McDonald's site at 177 Brompton Road lies next to Beaufort Gardens, where passing traffic parks to use McDonald's, causing noise and disturbance throughout the night. As we cannot object to TENs at the time of application it is important that residents record any nuisances arising and report them to RBKC's Licensing team [licensing@rbkc.gov.uk]. In the meantime we have

sought the support of our local RBKC councillors to ensure that the Council keeps a close eye on developments.

Here is a brief update on the main licensing applications in the past year:

CHAIWALA 241 Brompton Road



This originally involved 24-hour opening. Following our representations this was scaled back to a terminal hour of Midnight, except during Ramadan and Eid, when it would have been 1am. The application was taken to a full hearing of the RBKC Licensing Committee on 14 April 2022, at which the revised hours were agreed, although the 1am closing time will not apply on Sunday evenings.

CAFÉ CONCERTO 150-152 Brompton Road

This involved an application for a terminal hour of 11 p.m. for tables and chairs on the pavement, which we felt would have caused noise and disturbance to local residents. We lodged an objection, suggesting 10 p.m. as a more suitable time and await the outcome.

ELAN CAFÉ 42 Hans Crescent



This outlet has featured regularly in the KA newsletters and the annual report. This application was for an increase in the current number of tables (12) and chairs (24) by 50%, representing a significant intensification of use in an already crowded pedestrianised area. Yet again we objected on the grounds that the application would 1) be unfair on other commercial premises 2) result in excess noise

and obstruction 3) set a precedent for applications from other outlets and 4) lead to overcrowding and degradation of the whole Crescent. Despite our objections, this application was approved and a new 12 month licence granted which began on 3 October 2022.

ISIBANI, 9 Knightsbridge Green

We supported a detailed objection from the management company representing an apartment block close to the premises. Our principal concerns were the proposed terminal hours (2am on Fridays and Saturdays), the capacity of the venue to safely cater for the number of anticipated patrons and potential noise and anti-social behaviour. We are pleased to report that in light of these objections, and others expressed by the Metropolitan Police and WCC's Environmental Health Service, the terminal hour was brought back to Midnight. As our concerns had been fully addressed, we withdrew our objection. Since then, we have been made aware of a flyer, circulated to local residents, advertising a closing time of 2am as per the original, withdrawn, application. We have alerted WCC's Licensing team and asked them to investigate and report back to us.

LAW AND ORDER

Anne Wright

RELEVANT PENDING LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

PEDICAB (LONDON) BILL

This Bill which has now reached its second reading in the House of Commons has at its aim to make provision for Transport for London

(TfL) to regulate pedicabs in London for the first time. Residents will be aware of the operation of pedicabs, although you may not be aware that pedicabs have been operating in London for about 30 years! As pedicabs are unregulated, the precise number operating is unknown, but estimates range from 400 to up to 1400. Although even this higher number is small compared to other modes of

transport there is continuing concern, as highlighted by local MP Nickie Aiken, the sponsor of this Bill, that many pedicabs lack safety standards requirements and that they cause traffic problems such as contravening restrictions on one-way streets, parking in bus lanes and impeding traffic.

By some legal anomaly TfL is unable to regulate pedicabs in the same way as they do taxis, and the



REPLACEMENT OF THE VAGRANCY ACT 1824

The Knightsbridge Association in April this year submitted its views in respect of the Consultation launched by The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the proposed replacement of the Vagrancy Act which makes begging an offence punishable by fine and or imprisonment. Knightsbridge has at times been subject to what appear to be organised begging by criminal gangs, including from overseas, which has naturally caused unease.

requiring those who wish to use residential premises for short-term accommodation for more than 90 nights in a calendar year to seek planning permission from their Local Planning Authority.

Although proponents highlight the benefits of the accommodation sharing economy for consumers and the economy in general concerns have been raised about the negative impacts associated with the rapid growth in short-term lettings and their concentration in certain neighbourhoods including our own in Knightsbridge.

Westminster City Council followed the government's consultation in February with their own in September on representations made by local Councillor Rachael Robathan. The findings of the consultation are awaited but Westminster are seeking similar powers as those in Paris and Amsterdam to stop central London being overrun by nuisance short term lets by the use of fines. The introduction of a registration scheme is key to the regulation of such lettings and the local authority is keen to work with the government on securing new powers to target owners for the increasing nuisance of noise, rowdy parties, overcrowding, rubbish dumping and on nightly lets sex working. The Knightsbridge Association is keeping a careful watch on the progress of any new government and local legislation.

CRIME REPORT

Gratifyingly overall crime figures for the past year are lower than 2021 – just! As a community we continue to be well supported by our dedicated Police team who meet with representatives of the Knightsbridge Association quarterly to report on crime 'hot spots' and provide suitable advice and assistance.

Theft from vehicles is still of concern particularly in those streets and squares adjacent to the shopping and restaurants in the Brompton Road and Knightsbridge. Private security arrangements in certain areas have, it has been

police have few powers to control them effectively. The consequence is that companies operating pedicabs are not licenced as neither are their drivers or vehicles, and there is no requirement for pedicab drivers to undergo criminal record or right to work checks – and as anyone who has been 'stung' knows - there is no fare control.

The Bill therefore makes provision for regulation of use in public in Greater London, licencing and pricing regulation of the pedicabs, their drivers and operators in the same manner as taxis. TfL would be enabled to make further regulations on a range of other matters including eligibility requirements for drivers and operators, standards of safety and equipment, appearance and markings, speed restriction and drivers conduct. All such requirements should help ensure the safety of passengers and protect other road users.

Enforcement through TfL would create offences in relation to the provision of false or misleading information in connection with licensing or failure to comply with the requirements imposed by the regulations with prosecutions being dealt with in the Magistrates Courts with a maximum fine of £2,500. One does however wonder whether a fine of this size is sufficient deterrent. We will wait and see what further transpires on second reading.

The response given to the Consultation was that as an Association we were supportive of any effective action to respond to begging alongside wider work to reduce rough sleeping. New laws which effectively dealt with the most detrimental types of begging which may involve aggressive behaviour, exploitation, or coercion particularly in an organised or systematic manner in places such as our Tube stations, cashpoints or shopping areas should be prioritised and would be supported.

The government is now analysing the feedback and we will wait on the outcome of the Consultation in early course.

SHORT TERM LETTINGS

The number of short-term lettings has increased significantly in recent years, due to the development and growth of the 'sharing economy' and 'peer-to-peer' accommodation services such as Airbnb. These online platforms essentially provide marketplaces which connect people who want to rent out their properties or spare rooms with people seeking short-term accommodation.

Outside London, there is no specific limit on the number of days a property can be let out on a short-term basis. It is up to the local planning authority to make a judgement as to whether a letting amounts to a material change of use, for which planning permission must be sought. Different rules apply to London homeowners however

reported, made a distinct difference to the lowering of the number of thefts, burglaries, and robberies.

Residents and visitors to Knightsbridge should be particularly aware of high speed 'gang land' mobile 'phone and watch thefts in the areas of Hyde Park and Knightsbridge – most particularly in the summer and winter months and after dark. Pickpockets and shop lifting is particularly prevalent in the tourist season around the coffee shops, Tube stations and principle shopping areas.

Anti-social driving and 'car meets' continue to be monitored by the Police aided by the operation of acoustic cameras in key favoured areas of Knightsbridge and penalty notices issued by post to the culprits.

Our Police team need all our help in assisting them in their work by reporting to them any unusual behaviour or incidents and of course actual crimes. The best way to do this is by telephoning or emailing the following:

CRIME STOPPERS:

0800 555 111 <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/>

WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL NOISE TEAM:

020 7641 2000 <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/noise-pollution>

ACTION FRAUD:

030 0123 2040 <http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>

METROPOLITAN POLICE CRIME PREVENTION:

<http://content.met.police.uk/Site/crimeprevention>

CONFIDENTIAL VICTIM SUPPORT:

08081689111

**Call 101 for non-emergency police assistance
IN AN EMERGENCY ALWAYS CALL 999**

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Chris Barrass and Simon Birkett

CLEANER AIR

We have seen progress again towards cleaner air with no further breaches of the World Health Organisation's ('WHO's') hourly guideline for nitrogen dioxide in Brompton Road in the 10 months to 31 October 2022, despite the formal end of the pandemic. This progress is supported by substantial changes to the vehicle fleet in London. For example, Uber says that it now has 7,000 electric vehicles ('EVs') in London (up from 100 in 2019) and the percentage of miles driven by EVs rocketed in the last year from 6% to 15%. At a local level, we have seen the rollout of electric charging points, with special parking provision, in Ennismore Gardens, Rutland Gate, Montpelier Street and elsewhere. Much more action is needed

however to comply with the WHO's new air quality guidelines including to reduce emissions from buildings.

TFL REFINANCING

On 30 August 2022, Transport for London (TfL) and the Government reached agreement on a funding settlement until 31 March 2024 to support London's recovery from the pandemic. This should help TfL to avoid large scale cuts to bus and other services, allow it to purchase new trains for the Piccadilly Line and invest in walking and cycling measures and progress important capital projects. It will still leave TfL with a target for further savings of around £90m in 2022/23 and £140m in 2023/24 beyond the £730m per annum recurring savings programme it has already committed to. Options

to close the funding gap could include restricting free travel for over 60s, cuts to bus services, fare increases and/or road user charging. Meanwhile, tube use and traffic volumes remain lower than pre-pandemic levels.

PARK LANE AND SOUTH CARRIAGE DRIVE

The KA's long-term transport vision for Knightsbridge is less traffic and congestion, less pollution and fewer road traffic collisions and more public transport and active travel i.e. walking and cycling. We also need to balance the ability and convenience to move around locally with the need to get into the area in the first place. In our experience, these changes can require consistency and persistence of approach over many years and

require constructive pressure on relevant public bodies.

In this context, our main current focus is on South Carriage Drive and Park Lane. As you may remember, The Royal Parks consulted on its proposal to close South Carriage Drive on Saturdays in July 2019 (in addition to Sundays). It ended up closing South Carriage Drive seven days a week in June 2020 after TfL

have obviously also removed some local route options e.g. through Edinburgh Gate or Prince of Wales Gate.

The closure of South Carriage Drive (and North Carriage Drive) seven days a week may have been necessary for immediate safety reasons, after the Park Lane changes were introduced without consultation, but it could have suited The Royal Parks which is



Works to Park Lane cycle lane

introduced a cycle route, bus and taxi lane and 20 mph speed limit on the northbound carriageway of Park Lane. The Royal Parks says the closure remains in place pending "TfL's solution to ensuring a safe interface between the Park Lane cycle route and the park gates onto Park Lane".

TfL says that the Park Lane changes have increased the average weekday journey time between Knightsbridge and Marble Arch via Park Lane by one to two minutes over the last three years. They have also reduced the resilience of the traffic network when there is major disruption by making it more difficult for TfL to manage the effects of emergency road works. The Park Lane changes

seeking generally to reduce through-traffic in its Parks. For example, it took the decision in October 2022 to make permanent measures to "reduce the impact of cut-through traffic, improve the park visitor experience and open new spaces for park visitors to enjoy" in Richmond Park, Bushy Park and Greenwich Park. It looks likely that they will make permanent the closure of The Mall, Constitution Hill and South Carriage Drive to traffic on Saturdays in addition to the normal Sundays. The last of these would await a TfL decision on the future of the Park Lane Cycleway.

As you may remember, the KA has asked The Royal Parks and TfL to agree a compromise which would involve Constitution Hill-type segregated cycling and pedestrian space along the Broad Walk to improve journeys for pedestrians and cyclists and the creation of more space and network resilience for traffic using Park Lane. In October 2022, TfL launched a consultation on making permanent the cycle, bus and other changes in Park Lane. The consultation documents say that "TfL and Royal Parks are exploring options to improve cycle access between Park Lane and South Carriage Drive".

When considering these measures, it is important to be aware that ideas have been floated by third

parties to improve Marble Arch and Hyde Park Corner e.g. along the lines of changes over many years to Trafalgar Square. The adopted Mayfair Neighbourhood Plan ('MNP') also "encourages pursuit of the opportunity to investigate, define and deliver the optimum scheme for future works to reduce traffic levels and improve the public realm on Park Lane". One illustration in the MNP shows the pedestrianisation of the southbound carriageway. TfL's general vision for Park Lane is that it should be much less dominated by private motor vehicle traffic on the grounds that London's roads are not exclusively for the use of any one particular group of users or mode of transport.

At the time of writing, the KA had yet to formulate a response to TfL's consultation on their proposal to make permanent the changes in Park Lane which was scheduled to close on 4 December 2022. However, it seemed highly likely that the KA would argue for: TfL and the Royal Parks to agree our proposal for the Broad Walk, the re-opening of South Carriage Drive five days a week and the creation of more vehicle space and network resilience in Park Lane; and clarity or information on possible longer-term changes to Park Lane, Marble Arch and Hyde Park Corner. Ultimately however, there seems to be a 'Mexican standoff' between TfL and the Royal Parks where nothing might change because they are wholly separate organisations. Our councillors, London Assembly Member and Westminster City Council may be able to help. We would not want to see TfL making permanent changes in Park Lane unless these related issues are resolved satisfactorily.

SLOANE STREET

Work is underway finally to implement proposals, developed over many years, to improve the public realm in Sloane Street as explained in Giles Semper's excellent article elsewhere in this Annual Report. The end result should be neutral in traffic terms,



Works underway in Sloane Street

but the works will cause traffic disruption in 2023 and 2024.

At the time of writing, we had just heard that the northbound carriageway of Sloane Street could be closed for highway works from early January until the end of August 2023 followed by the southbound carriageway until October 2024. East-west access might be maintained at Pont Street. We have asked whether: it is necessary to close the whole length of Sloane Street for each phase; what diversions are needed and likely including for buses; what mitigation of impacts is possible (e.g. signage); and for a 'Community Liaison Group' style meeting of stakeholders before the end of 2022 to discuss the plans and communication arrangements. We have also asked for confirmation of final plans for the junctions of Sloane Street with Scotch House Corner and Sloane Square. Our main concern is that the works could result in the diversion of traffic into nearby streets over the short, medium or long term e.g. Beauchamp Place, Belgrave Square, Lowndes Square, Ovington Gardens or Wilton Place. Last, but not least, we are keen for

the Councils and project managers to communicate the arrangements to those who might be affected (as Cadent did with its gas works).

Please read Giles Semper's article and email Sloane.Street@fmconway.co.uk if you would like to know more about the roadworks or ask to be added to their project newsletter.

ALBERT GATE AND WILLIAM STREET

We understand that Westminster City Council may be looking to make permanent the arrangements in William Street and improve access to Hyde Park at Albert Gate. The KA would like to see improvements for cyclists and pedestrians there and into the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and action to manage tables and chairs on pavements outside cafes and restaurants and illegal parking nearby.

WASTE AND RECYCLING

The Council's contractor Veolia continues to keep our residential streets clean although there have been ongoing problems

in Brompton Road. The Knightsbridge Partnership Business Improvement District team is 'on the case' with rubbish and recycling dumped chaotically in Brompton Road. The KA encourages you to report all instances of rubbish dumped out of hours or improperly, using the FixMyStreet.com website or app. You can also report it on Council websites. A zero-tolerance approach helps Veolia to identify problem locations quickly and take enforcement action where

necessary. You can help us to keep the streets clean by finding one or two street champions who might take a lead in your street or square in reporting rubbish dumped illegally or out of hours.



Dumped rubbish and badly stained pavements

MEMBERS' SECTION



MEETINGS

2021/22

60th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND 60th ANNIVERSARY

Yet again, due to the pandemic and lockdown, celebration of the Association's 60th Anniversary had to be postponed and the holding of the 61st Annual General Meeting again took place via Zoom. Although this type of meeting works quite well with practice, and this was the second time round, there is no substitute for meeting in person in the beautiful Ballroom at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel

2022/23

61st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND 60th ANNIVERSARY

So it is with great pleasure and fingers crossed that we will once again be able to welcome members and guests to the Mandarin Oriental on Monday 16 January 2023. Our thanks go to the management of the hotel who very kindly held over the booking for

our anticipated 60th Anniversary to cover, first the 2021/22 AGM, and then again for the 2022/23 AGM.

This year the Raffle proceeds will be donated to Age UK Westminster.

FINANCES AND MEMBERSHIP

The date for the end of the KA Annual Accounts Financial year has been moved from 31 March to 30 September. This enables the KA to present more up-to-date Annual Accounts for the AGM held in January. The Accounts to be presented at the AGM on 16 January 2023 therefore cover the 18 month period from 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2022, for both The Knightsbridge Association and for The Nammos Appeal which is a separate Lloyds business bank account.

The current balance for the Knightsbridge Association stands at £77,998 compared to £79,534 in March 2021, and £77,098 in March 2022. Advertising revenue covered the cost of the 2021

Annual Report. The Knightsbridge Association contributed £6,000 to the Nammos Appeal and we paid in advance for most of the costs of the January 2022 AGM and 60th Anniversary Reception to be held at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. These events were held on Zoom or postponed because of Covid, so the costs of the January 2023 AGM and 60th Anniversary Reception have largely been paid already.

The Nammos Appeal currently stands at £31,028. The Second Nammos Appeal raised £25,470 and there is £13,658 remaining from the first Nammos Appeal. Payments to Walsingham Planning over the last 18 months have totalled £24,920, and Counsel's legal costs for the Appeal Hearing held in October remain outstanding.

Membership has been fairly constant over the last year. There is one new Life membership, some new members have joined following the Nammos Appeal and others have moved out of London or resigned.

We would like to thank Neil Carthy for his support with moving our accounts to Quickbooks Online, and thank Tom Slator of MacCallum Slator very much for again checking the Annual Accounts.

APPRECIATIONS

CHRIS BARRASS

We are grateful to Chris Barrass for taking time out of his schedule to chair the Transport and Environment committee and for his support on contentious Planning and Licensing issues arising in Knightsbridge throughout 2022.

SIMON BIRKETT

Many thanks to Simon for his diligence in articulating the Neighbourhood Plan provisions designed to protect residential amenity. This was undoubtedly the best line of defence we had when challenging the re-development of 13-17 Montpelier Street. The time you devote to running the Transport and Environment committee is greatly appreciated.

FRANCES BLOIS

Frances makes timely and informed interjections on Planning, Law and Order and Licensing issues based on her experience at Westminster City Council and her observations on the Nammos Appeal committee have been most helpful. Thank you for the time you devote to these important activities.

FRANCESCO BRENTA

Our thanks to Francesco for playing a key role in mobilising support from neighbours against redevelopment proposals at 13-17 Montpelier Street. Your forensic approach and persistence over multiple LBC applications was exemplary and you were always available as a committed member of the Nammos Appeal Team.

NEIL CARTHY

Our email system works smoothly and without a hitch due to Neil's

careful oversight and management. He has also made an invaluable contribution in helping our Treasurer migrate KA's accounts into Quickbooks. Thank you for your quiet, reassuring help on these vital technical matters.

OLIVIA COX

Thank you, Olivia for ten years of meticulous service looking after KA's accounts, the membership database, and a host of social events. Nothing has been too difficult for you to manage and always with a smile and good humour. You have given us generous notice of your intention to step down and when that moment comes you will be greatly missed. Thank you for your dedication over such a long period of time.

BEN LEGG and HENRY DINKEL

We thank Ben and Henry for their help during their time with us. KA's principal communications revolve around contact with Local Authorities and in consequence we have not been able to take full advantage of your considerable social media talents.

PAUL MEITNER

Paul has very generously extended his workload by standing in for Olivia as Treasurer in her absence as well as handling membership communications and Licensing. Thank you for your active contribution this year and for your very practical and grounded comments in committee.

ALEXANDRA MORGAN THOMAS

Alexandra very gamely volunteered to manage advertising for the 2022 Annual Report. Thank you for devoting time to this critical event in our calendar. We hope you will choose to achieve another good result for us in 2023!

CAROL SEYMOUR- NEWTON

We are indebted to Carol for playing a pivotal role in the preparation of the 2022 annual report and for unstinting work on the Spring and Autumn newsletters. In addition to this, she also runs the Planning and Conservation committee while continuing to radiate the KA's message to the wider community.

ELMAR TOIME

Thanks to Elmar we now have access to a seamless process for printing and distributing Newsletters and Annual Reports on a cost-effective basis. This makes a material contribution to KA's finances for which we are once again most grateful.

ANNE WRIGHT

We are very grateful to Anne for agreeing to join the Law and Order committee early in 2022 while continuing to act as a practicing lawyer. Thank you for your forthright contributions at Licensing hearings and for picking up the baton on several other passing issues.

SAMER YOUNIS

Samer provides invaluable support to Carol running the Planning and Conservation committee. Thank you for this vital contribution. Your help in restructuring the Law and Order committee is much appreciated as are your initiatives across several other fronts.

BARBARA LINTON

Once again, our special thanks to Barbara who has 'type-set and published' the KA's annual reports and newsletters since 2001. Thank you for being such a patient, resourceful and unflappable curator of the Association's public face.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE FORUM

Simon Birkett

The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum's (the Forum) principal priorities in 2022 have been to comment selectively on significant planning applications, consider possible minor modifications to the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan (KNP) and Knightsbridge Evidence Base Document, comment on possible changes to the development plan framework and identify topics for the spending of the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL), of which more below. The first of these included speaking at the informal hearing on the appeals relating to 'Nammos'.

As you may remember from our previous articles for the KA annual report, the NCIL is a levy on residential development that is collected by Westminster City Council and must be spent within the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area. By the end of October 2022, the amount available was about £280,000 after £20,000 was

allocated for each of the renovation of the hole-in-the-wall and towards specialist lighting of statues of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in niches on the north side of the Royal Albert Hall. The latter should be completed in early 2023.

The KNP defines principles and types of general and area-specific projects for the spending of NCIL. These include an aim to spend about half the money in the area where it is raised and half more widely. The KNP board has identified four priority projects for NCIL spending which include: professional grade CCTV; the restoration and improvement of heritage features; attracting more nature to Knightsbridge; and accelerating action towards a zero emission (and climate-resilient) neighbourhood. We will discuss these projects with local stakeholders with the aim of progressing them over the next year. In doing so, we hope to leverage off larger projects

undertaken by the cultural institutions and the Knightsbridge Partnership BID for the benefit of the wider neighbourhood.

Westminster City Council changed its procedures for approving and managing NCIL in late October 2022 so we will need to study them. On the face of it, some new requirements will make it harder to submit applications e.g. that 'applications should be supported by at least three quotes for delivery', 'projects should identify match funding'. There is also a long outstanding question on the possible need to forward-fund VAT in some circumstances. At the time of writing, we are seeking clarification from the Council and other forums on these issues. In any event, please contact the Forum via our website if you have ideas for the spending of NCIL, including the four mentioned above, at www.knightsbridgeforum.org/contact/

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL (WCC).

As reported in the Autumn Newsletter, Labour won a historic victory in the local elections in May, taking control of the Council for the first time ever. In early October they launched their Strategy for a Fairer Westminster under a series of headings including Communities, Housing, Economy, Environment and Council. Cllr Adam Hug is the new Leader. Amongst the new Cabinet members, Cllr Geoff Barraclough has the Planning and Economic Development portfolio, Cllr Aicha Less has charge of Communities and Public Protection

and Cllr Paul Dimoldenberg has City Management.

Our three ward councillors, Rachael Robathan, Elizabeth Hitchcock and Tony Devenish were all re-elected.

Cllr. Hamza Taouzzale became the youngest Lord Mayor of Westminster.

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA (RBKC)

The May elections showed little change at RBKC, with the Conservatives retaining control. Cllr Elizabeth Campbell retains the Leadership, other Lead Members are Cllr. Cem Kemahli, Planning,

Place and Environment which includes Transport Strategy, Waste Management, Licensing, Response to Climate Emergency and Air Quality; and Cllr. Emma Will who has responsibility for Community Safety and Culture.

All three Brompton and Hans Town ward councillors – Mary Weale, Sof McVeigh and Walaa Idris – were re-elected.

RBKC'S CITY PLAN – PARTIAL REVIEW

This was published after we went to press – too late to include a comment.

WESTMINSTER'S CITY PLAN – PARTIAL REVIEW

*Simon Birkett, Chair, Knightsbridge
Neighbourhood Forum*

Westminster City Council's City Plan sets out the Council's vision and framework for how long-term housing, commercial and infrastructure growth will be delivered in Westminster. The planning policies within it cover a range of topics including housing, sustainability, heritage, transport, the visitor economy and employment. The current City Plan was adopted in April 2021 after a lengthy process.

As expected, the new Labour administration launched a 'partial review' of the City Plan in October 2022 to refocus it on

their ambitions which include building more affordable homes, prioritising the retrofitting of existing buildings and identifying 'Site allocations' for future development. This was a Regulation 18 consultation.

The proposals aim to: maximise the provision of genuinely affordable housing for those most in housing need; prioritise the retrofit and refurbishment of existing buildings to reduce the impact of development on climate change; and transform underused sites to provide more affordable homes, job opportunities and support infrastructure.

The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum supports all these aims. We would like the retrofitting policy to take a broader and deeper approach to mitigating

and adapting to climate change and restoring biodiversity. The revised City Plan should also do more to encourage significant action in these areas during refurbishments. These issues could not be fully addressed in the 2021 version of the plan because its revision was well underway before the whole Council declared a climate emergency in September 2019.

The Council will consider responses to the Regulation 18 consultation during 2023 before launching a Regulation 19 consultation with draft policies and site allocations expected towards the end of 2023. This would be followed by a public examination by an independent planning inspector. An updated Plan could appear by 2025 with full review of the City Plan expected to follow in due course.

TACKY SWEET SHOPS INVADE THE INTERNATIONAL SHOPPING CENTRES.

Rachael Robathan, Leader of the Conservative Group WCC.

Few people visiting our iconic shopping streets can have failed to notice the worrying phenomenon of Candy Stores. Starting on Oxford Street, this trend has seen huge numbers of shops selling an almost identical inventory of US style sweets and it is now spreading to other areas including the Brompton Road. Almost always empty with usually only one or two people working there, often standing menacingly in the doorway. To say that these are giving a poor impression for these International Retail Centres desperate to attract visitors again is an understatement. So what is going on?

At Westminster City Council, we started working on this over a year ago, principally in a bid to recover outstanding business rates. On Oxford Street alone, we are investigating 30 premises for evasion of business rates amounting to £8 million. This is money desperately needed to fund our public services. However, not only is it incredibly expensive and time consuming to pursue a conviction, it is also almost impossible to make



it stick. It's not just lost taxes that are the problem, allegations have been made of money laundering and organised criminal activity and there is also the sale of countless counterfeit and unsafe goods. Before Christmas, Operation Jade carried out on Oxford Street by Council Trading Standards together with the Metropolitan police, found vapes and sweets with dangerous levels of psychoactive substances in them. More recently,

a similar operation confiscated £215,000 of fake and unsafe goods and this is just scratching the surface.

What can be done? First we lobbied both HMRC and the National Crime Agency to ensure they realised the extent of the problem and would look at ways to tackle the problem at source. This is now progressing and I am pleased that the new administration at the Council has recognised the importance of carrying on this work. Second, we need to work with landlords to address what can be done. While no landlord wishes to assume liability for business rates which comes if a premises is empty, the risk of letting to a Candy Store may serve to undermine the value of those properties over the longer term. Just look at the problem on Oxford Street. In the meantime, the Council will continue to work with the police to disrupt activity and confiscate fake and unsafe goods, but this problem needs to be tackled at its origin. No one wants to see the proliferation on Oxford Street happening elsewhere.



Cladding: While progress has been made, there is still more to do

Building and fire safety is a critically important issue. In Kensington and Knightsbridge we feel it very deeply. We will never forget the 72 who died in the Grenfell tragedy.

We have made significant progress with the Fire Safety Act and the landmark Building Safety Act but there is more to be done. There are still buildings with issues to be resolved and I am working with affected, local residents to address issues in particular buildings, as soon as practicable. We need to have a real sense of urgency. This situation has been going on for too long.

We must fix the system for good, ensuring that industry rectifies the problems it created and making sure that the leaseholders who have been so unfairly caught up in this scandal get the relief and protection they deserve.

The Building Safety Act came into force over the Summer. It represents a substantial set of reforms with a tough new regulator and regulatory regime to ensure people's homes are made safe. The Act means that every block of flats must have someone responsible for the building's safety. It also provides far reaching legal protections to leaseholders.

Government will have powers to force owners to fix dangerous buildings for which they are responsible and ensure remediation works are fast and proportionate. Forty-nine of the largest housebuilders have now risen to the challenge and signed a pledge to fix unsafe buildings that they developed or refurbished. We will turn those pledges into legally binding contracts. A Recovery Strategy Unit will expose and pursue firms and individuals involved in cases of building safety neglect, with the ability to pursue legal action.

But this is also about making the whole industry, including construction products manufacturers, right the wrongs of the past. It's why government is working with the insurance industry and the Financial Conduct Authority to ensure that insurance premiums in these buildings are reasonable. It's also why Government is continuing to work relentlessly with the lending industry to ensure leaseholders are no longer trapped by extreme risk aversion and unnecessary paperwork, unlocking the property market in these buildings.

We now have the legislative framework and commitments from industry. We need to ensure that issues with every single affected building are remediated and dealt with at the highest speed.

Member of Parliament for Kensington

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KNIGHTSBRIDGE PARTNERSHIP



In October this year, the newly formed Knightsbridge Partnership Business Improvement District made a little local history that will enhance the lives of all our district's businesses, residents, employees and visitors.

At our Members Breakfast to celebrate our first year of operation we were joined on stage by the Leaders of Westminster City Council and Kensington and Chelsea Council. For the first time we witnessed leaders of the two boroughs, business and the local community pledging to work together, across boundaries, and take a coordinated approach to improving the Knightsbridge area.

As Chief Executive of Knightsbridge Partnership this to me was a major milestone crossed. Harnessing the power of partnership is one of our BID's five core pillars and here it is in action. For too long our district, sitting on the edges of two boroughs, has suffered from a lack of focus as our public realm has deteriorated and investment has been spent elsewhere.

Our new BID is here as a catalyst, bringing people together and actively promoting a vision befitting of one of only two International Centres in London. Already we are delivering some good results.

You can't have failed to notice how our street teams have provided an additional uniformed presence on the streets, dedicated to making Knightsbridge a safer, more welcoming place for everyone.

We recently joined with community groups to make bids for three Community Infrastructure Levy projects, worth over £450,000, to enhance local air quality, improve the public realm and introduce CCTV.

We have set up a Cross boundary task force with both councils to reach a common standard for street services across our district such

as cleaning, recycling and waste collection. We are exploring ways to adding to the baseline levels of services so that they reach higher standards, as we should expect in an International Centre.

Our core pillar of leveraging our International Centre Status has led us to join with the West End, both to lobby on national issues such as reintroducing tax-free shopping and to deliver joint services that directly help our businesses. Our £1 million Westminster Works scheme is an innovative recruitment service created and run jointly by Knightsbridge Partnership and New West End Company to help all of Westminster's hospitality and leisure businesses to fill their many vacancies.

And we are bringing a district-wide approach to key promotion and marketing services for our businesses. This year, for the first time, Knightsbridge will have a joined-up Christmas lights display, using over 24,000 LED low-energy bulbs.

We are formulating a marketing programme so that we can bring together all the amazing attractions of Knightsbridge to promote our wonderful district to the world.

Our new footfall cameras will allow businesses to understand how our district is doing year on year and in comparison with the rest of London.

Our approach is always one of partnership. Right from the very start we recognised that Knightsbridge's businesses are one

part of a wide and richly varied local community. From our initial feasibility study, to our Business Plan, with our major vision study we commissioned from Arup, and through membership on our Board we have always ensured that the views of all our community partners are recognised, understood and accommodated.

Too often in the past there was little opportunity for us all to get together so that we can discuss what needs to be done to make Knightsbridge an even better place to work, visit and live in. Now, Knightsbridge Partnership provides that forum and opportunity.

That's why our one-year celebration event was so historic. It showed the whole of Knightsbridge's community coming together to play a part of our district's future. One year on, and already a lot achieved. But there is so much more to do to improve the amenities, the environment, the street scape, the mix of activities, the quality of street services, the pedestrian experience and the overall feel of our district.

Knightsbridge Partnership has a vision and a clear five-year delivery plan. I am looking forward to working with the Knightsbridge Association and all our partners in the years to come to ensure that Knightsbridge remains vibrant, viable and sustainable. We plan to deliver this in a balanced way that improves the quality of life of everyone in Knightsbridge.

Thank you Knightsbridge Association for all your support and input. You have helped us to create a Knightsbridge Partnership that works for everyone. To find out more please visit our new website www.knightsbridgepartnership.com

Steven Medway, Chief Executive

NEW LOOK FOR SLOANE STREET

Giles Semper – Cadogan Estate

Many worksites sprang up on Sloane Street in July. Most are linked to the two-year programme to transform the street into the pre-eminent luxury retail destination in the UK and perhaps in Europe. Although the scheme is led by RBKC it is entirely funded by Cadogan to the tune of approximately £46m.

The new design for the street – by John McAslan Architects – has evolved over many years and after significant local consultation. At its heart is one of the most ambitious on-street planting schemes ever seen in the capital, designed by Chelsea Flower Show multi-award winner Andy Sturgeon and accommodated in 48 built-in planters and 36 freestanding pots. All existing 37 trees on the street will be retained and another 110 trees added. Considerable thought has been given to ensuring that the crowns of the trees complement the retail frontages and don't obscure them.



Pavements on the street will be widened while retaining capacity for the same number of vehicles. Paving will be a mixture of granite sets and gorgeous York stone extracted from a single seam in a quarry near Huddersfield. (The recent upgrade of surfaces around the Belmond Cadogan Hotel shows what can be expected.) Street furniture is mainly bespoke, including the 43 lamp standards that will replace the existing 33 columns. (A sample can be seen outside the Bulgari store.) These incorporate both high and low-level (pavement-illuminating) lamps and feature detailing drawn from Holy Trinity Church, 'the cathedral of the Arts and Crafts Movement'.

Currently contractor Squarepoint is filling some of the 300-plus cellars on the street that might not otherwise be able to bear the weight of the final scheme. Reach Active is diverting utilities for a similar reason. Reach Active is proceeding up the west side of the street through until May and will then head up the east side of the street, concluding

in May 2024. From January 2023 contractor FM Conway will install the final scheme, again proceeding up the west side followed by the east side, and likely concluding towards the end of 2024. During this phase there will be a full northbound lane closure followed by a full southbound lane closure, accompanied by traffic diversions.

Regular updates are posted on the project website at <https://sloanestreetfuture.co.uk/>. If you have any particular concerns or questions, please contact FM Conway's Public Liaison Officers Helen McConnell and Cate Green at sloane.street@fmconway.co.uk or on either 07917 518 529 or 07443 077 444.

EXHIBITION ROAD CULTURAL GROUP

Emily Candler – Executive Director

This year, there has been a buzz in Exhibition Road as we see a steady increase in the number of visitors and school groups coming to the district. More so than ever, there is an extraordinary programme of exhibitions, lates, festivals, concerts, talks, tours and installations to appeal to culture

lovers far and wide.

June saw the rescheduled Mathew Bourne production of *The Car Man* – part of the Hall's postponed 150 year celebration. The dance-thriller brought revved up, exhilarating drama and passion to the Hall with Bourne's take on Bizet's *Carmen* with a cast of

65 performers. We also saw the return of a full auditorium for this year's BBC Proms with more than 3,000 musicians performing at over 80 events across two months of summer. Continuing the 150th anniversary celebrations, will be the European Premiere of Cirque du Soleil's *Kurios: Cabinet of*

Curiosities – another awe-inspiring show packed with daring acrobatics, clever contortion and breath-taking talent entertaining audiences of all ages from 13 January 2023.

This summer's highlight was of course, the return of the Great Exhibition Road Festival as a large scale, outdoor event post-pandemic with over 38,000 visitors enjoying an exciting programme putting the spotlight on trailblazing ideas in science and the arts. The Festival is set to return next year on 17-18 June 2023 with another weekend of free events for all ages celebrating the inspirational power of awe and wonder in science and the arts.



Meeting her match at the Festival

Launched at the Festival and as part of the Kensington Art Trail, the 'Kaleidoscopic Minds – Thinking Differently' installation by local artist Azarra Amoy, was on display throughout the summer and autumn. The colourful artworks celebrated our neurodiverse community in the arts and sciences.

The autumn was of course marked by the sad passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who had close ties with South Kensington as a former patron to a number of our world-leading institutions and her countless visits to the area. Many of our member's paid tribute and reflected on the Monarch's visits to the area including marking the moment in social media history as she sent her first Tweet and Instagram post from the Science Museum.



The replica of Virgin Orbit's Launcher One rocket

On 11th September, we experienced a moment in history as the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's mayor, Cllr David Lindsay proclaimed the accession of His Majesty The King, Charles III in a public ceremony in front of the V&A's Exhibition Road entrance. For the 20th anniversary edition in September, once again the V&A became the hub for the London Design Festival, presenting a range of thought-provoking contemporary installations, workshops, events and talks which explored the transformative potential of design and the role of designers as choreographers of change. Galleries at Cromwell Place were taken over by Festival exhibitions and installations including a sensational life-sized interactive media platform, INTO SIGHT, where Sony Design

played on sensorial effects that transform surfaces into an infinite vista through shifting light, colour and sound.

The UK's first space launch was planned to take place from Spaceport Cornwall in Newquay towards the end of the year, dependent of course, on the weather. To celebrate this historic moment, UK Space Agency brought a 72 foot replica of Virgin Orbit's LauncherOne rocket to Exhibition Road together with a weekend of free space-themed events designed to engage young people about space and the career opportunities in the sector. Hands-on events and demos were hosted by the UK Space Agency, Virgin Orbit, Spaceport Cornwall, the Science Museum, Natural History Museum and Imperial College London.



© The Science Museum Group

Her Majesty The Queen and Director of the Science Museum Group Sir Ian Blatchford at the Science Museum on 7 March 2019

South Kensington welcomed Science Minister Ghani to officially open the event on Saturday 15th October, together with the Deputy CEO of the UK Space Agency (Ian Annett), CEO of Virgin Orbit (Dan Hart), Flight Lieutenant Mathew Stannard (who will pilot the launch), Felicity Buchan MP and a number of other senior officials. We were delighted to host a private guided tour of the replica for residents with Matt Archer – the UK Space Agency's Director of Commercial Space.

This year has seen a significant restoration project of Dora House (Old Brompton Road), home to the Royal Society of Sculptors. The Grade II listed headquarters (above) has been closed while



essential building works have been undertaken to restore the chimneys, roof and façade together with a transformation of the interior. Once the home to sculptor, Cecil Thomas who named the house after his beloved wife, Dora House was bequeathed to the Society in the 1970s providing a permanent headquarters – which plans to reopen later this year.

Leighton House Museum has also seen an extensive programme of redevelopment and conservation works. The Museum has reopened following an £8million *Hidden Gem to National Treasure* transformation providing new spaces, restored historic interiors and improved facilities. For the first time the building will provide full step-free access. There is also a new café



Crowds gather to enjoy the fun at the Exhibition Road festival

Experience a surprise Offworld Mission



providing floor-to-ceiling views out onto the large garden offering a new, free to enter, meeting place.

Towards the end of the year, the Goethe-Institut will celebrated 60 years since they opened with a programme of special anniversary events. They have become a hub for ideas, support, education and exchange, building a community of cultural collaborators.

Autumn continued at full pace with a steady stream of extraordinary events and exhibitions coming to the area and an exciting line-up for 2023. The Science Museum's *Science Fiction: Voyage to the Edge of Imagination* is one of their most ambitious exhibitions to date taking visitors on a fascinating journey connecting significant scientific innovations with celebrated science fiction works while accompanied by an AI guide. The exhibition is open until 4 May 2023.

The Science Museum also opened a free exhibition,

Injecting Hope: The Race for a Covid-19 Vaccine in November which explores the worldwide effort to develop vaccines (below) at pandemic speed. You can see how scientists and researchers adapted to the various challenges of this massive programme. In the same month, they also opened a new *Technicians: The David Sainsbury Gallery* – a free interactive gallery for ages 11–16 which brings the world of technicians to life, with young people able to explore where technicians work, try out the tasks they perform and meet real-life technicians in the gallery.



At the Natural History Museum, discover the natural world in all its wonder and diversity at the newly redesigned Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition which is open until 2 July 2023. There are quotes from the jury and photographers as well as insights from Museum scientists which invite you to explore how human actions continue to shape the natural world.

During summer, the V&A announced a captivating and landmark programme of new exhibitions for 2023. *Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance* (opening 11 February 2023) will be the first ever major UK exhibition on the Renaissance master, exploring the exceptional talents of one of the greatest sculptors of all time. *Diva* (opening 24 June 2023) celebrates the power and creativity of iconic performers from opera goddesses of the Victorian era to today's global megastars.

For all fashionistas, a big draw will be the V&A's *Gabrielle Chanel. Fashion Manifesto* – the first UK exhibition dedicated to the work of French couturière Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel which will chart the evolution of her iconic design style and establishment of the House of CHANEL. The exhibition opens on 16 September 2023.

Los Angeles Times Photographic Collection



Coco Chanel in 1931

Also in the Autumn, the V&A showcased the colourful and dynamic popular culture of South Korea with *Hallyu! The Korean Wave* exploring the impact of the Korean Wave ('hallyu') on the creative industries of cinema, drama, music, fashion and beauty. Open until 23 June 2023. *Re:Imagining Musicals* (open until 27 November 2023), meanwhile celebrates the glittering world of musical theatre and explores the cultural significance of some of the industry's most iconic stories.

The Design Museum offers an insight into the strange world of ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) at *Weird Sensation Feels Good: The World of ASMR* (on until 10th April 2023) – experiencing the physical sensation of euphoria or deep calm which can be triggered through sound, touch and movement. Or visit the dreamlike world of Surrealism and its relationship with design in *Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 – Today* (open until 19 February 2023). The exhibition brings together the best in Surrealist design from furniture, interior design, fashion, photography and world-renowned artworks.

In 2023 the Museum continues its diverse programming with 3 new exciting exhibitions. *Ai Weiwei: Making Sense* is the artist's first exhibition focusing on design and will mix recent works with commissioned pieces (opens 7 April 2023). *Skateboard* (opens 20 October 2023) is the first exhibition to chart how skateboards have evolved from the 1950s to now. While *The Offbeat Sari* (opening 19 May 2023) celebrates the contemporary sari and unravels its numerous forms.

Since spring this year, we have launched a series of special events for our neighbours inviting them into our member's venues for a chance to privately view some of

the latest exhibitions in the area. The first event was the Science Museum's *Amazônia* - a stunning exhibition presented by world-renowned photographer Sebastião Salgado. The series of black and white photographs celebrate the indigenous people and varied landscapes of the Brazilian rainforest.

In July we partnered with the Natural History Museum for a special showcase of the Urban Nature Project marking the upcoming transformation of the Museum's five-acre site into a biologically diverse, accessible green space. In September the Ismaili Centre welcomed neighbours to a private view of a stunning photography exhibition, opened by Prince Hussain Aga Khan, *The Living Sea – Fragile Beauty* celebrating the beauty and magic of the ocean, testifying to some of



the most enthralling and surprising encounters the photographer has experienced under the surface. We plan to continue this series of events and we would love to hear from you if you would like to be added to our invitation list.

We have shared just some of the highlights in South Kensington but if you want to discover more, visit our website www.discoversouthken.com where you can also sign up to our fortnightly newsletter to keep up to date with all the latest news and events in the area. If you would like to sign up for our special events for neighbours, please email sarahb@exhibitionroad.com

SERPENTINE SUMMER PAVILION 2022



In the heart of Kensington Gardens, The Black Chapel designed by Chicago based artist Theaster Gates and realized with architectural support of Adjaye Associates was a chapel-like structure topped with an oculus

evoking a place of religion and gathering. It was part of this year's Serpentine's annual pavilion.

The project mirrored the artist's ongoing engagement with 'the vessel' in his studio practice, and with space-making through his celebrated urban regeneration projects.



Drawn to the meditative environment of the Rothko Chapel – which holds fourteen paintings by American artist Mark Rothko in Houston, Texas – Gates has produced a series of new tar paintings titled Seven Songs for Black Chapel. Creating a space that reflects the artist's hand and sensibilities, seven paintings hang from the interior. In these works, Gates honours his father's craft as a roofer by using roofing strategies including torch down, a method which requires an open flame to heat material and affix it to a surface.

On Friday 14th October, Corinne Bailey Rae took the spotlight at the Serpentine's Pavilion followed by Gates' band, The Black Monks on Saturday 15th October.

Plans for the Summer Pavilion 2023 had yet to be announced as we went to press.

VIEW FROM THE ROYAL PARKS

KEEPING THE PARKS ALIVE AS WE FACE CLIMATE CHANGE PRESSURES

Andrew Scattergood CEO The Royal Parks

As Chief Executive of The Royal Parks, I am used to planning for a myriad of challenges from across the board – and planning and delivering our response to the climate crisis is top of the list.

However, I was particularly struck by the intensity of the drought we faced this summer, and the impact that this extreme weather had on the parks.

We experienced scorching hot, dry weather this July. And park regulars will have noted the concerning scarcity of water supplies and the impact on our trees, bedding and landscape.

It is clear that the impact of climate change will become more severe in the future and that we need to look after these natural landscapes sustainably now - and anticipate further pressures on the parks in the future.

I'm pleased to say we have already stolen a march on water sustainability and our teams have been investing in efficient water use for several years.

We have already upgraded our mains infrastructure to include smart metering, leak detection, and other devices to minimise

mains water consumption. So, all year round, our reliance on Thames Water's mains water is minimal. Most of the water we use to top up The Serpentine Lake, supply the Italian Gardens Fountains, water the flowers in the Hyde Park Nursery and for horticultural irrigation is drawn from three boreholes in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. Our mains water is always restricted to essential use, and only where alternative sources aren't available.

However, in response to the heatwaves and lack of rain this



summer, we implemented extra measures to ensure that we conserved our water use even more.

We voluntarily reduced water usage where it was possible to do so without a severe, long-term impact on the parks. For example, we stopped spray irrigation of large areas such as the Parade Ground in Hyde Park and the West Lawns in St James's Park, well before a drought was declared.

Then came the hosepipe ban – the first for many years.

During the hosepipe ban we adhered to all restrictions - which fortunately still allowed the use of borehole water. This meant that since our water supply is mainly derived from borehole sources, we

were able to continue to protect the most vulnerable aspects of the parks' natural landscape.

We continued to do everything we could to reduce watering, but we couldn't stop watering completely.

As temperatures soared to 40°C, London would have been unbearable without the parks. Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens were cooling refuges, providing shade from the trees and respite from the intense heat, especially for Londoners without access to garden space.

And the parks provided many benefits to the city's central zones. This includes carbon capture of the landscape, and the incredible flowers and shrubs which provide the city with a rich biodiverse

environment – including a habitat for bees and other invertebrates, which in turn support wildlife including birds and mammals.

However, as the heat of the summer months extended, we saw unprecedented pressures on the landscape and trees.

So, to keep watering to a minimum, we prioritised. We targeted watering to where it was essential only for the health of the parks, to keep the vital natural environment alive.

We focused on protecting 'establishing' turf and floral displays, which are so valuable to insects and pollinators. Our staff carried out spot watering of newly-planted trees and shrubs, and trees which showed signs of extreme stress.

We introduced watering bags to direct the water to the watering tubes which directly fed water to the trees' roots. We did have concerns that wildlife such as crows might peck the bags to reach the water but luckily this wasn't a problem.

As standard practise, we always support young trees with additional watering for the first two or three years of their planting, while their roots develop. But unusually this year we also had to water some of our older, more established trees which were suffering under the strain of the drought. Concerningly,





Parched lawns by the Henry Moore statue (left). Hungry Canada geese scratch for fresh food (below)

we found that many trees were struggling - with leaves turning brown as early as August.

To be as efficient as possible, we also watered when it was cooler – either early morning or late evening, or even overnight, ensuring watering was targeted and carefully managed to deliver maximum benefit.

Looking back, I am proud of our response. Despite the extreme weather, we did a good job in protecting the parks' natural assets. But we must not pause. It is crucial to plan for the future.

I am committed to our development of approaches to manage the parks more sustainably all year round, such

as the distribution of 'mulch' or woodchips to retain soil moisture around trees.

Longer-term I would like us to develop and build the natural resilience of the landscape within the parks, increasing the coverage of meadows – which are more resistant to hot weather, enhancing biodiversity, planting tree species which are more resilient to drought, and strengthening the ecosystems within the parks to better withstand climatic stresses.

And throughout, I will continue to ensure that we carry out best practice in the sustainable use of water, working collaboratively with the Environment Agency and Thames Water, as a responsible partner.



WINTER WONDERLAND 2022

It is 15 years since Hyde Park first hosted Winter Wonderland and it has become the Royal Parks main fundraiser. This year's event opened on November 8 with six brand new attractions from high-adrenaline rides to immersive VR experiences and all the old favourites. During off-peak times entry is free. The event runs to January 2 2023.



One of the favourite attractions

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

WHAT IS THE URBAN NATURE PROJECT?

Dr Doug Gurr, Director of the Natural History Museum



The East Garden

It has never been more important to make our towns and cities healthy and sustainable places to live.

Wildlife is in trouble in the UK. The natural world faces unprecedented declines and needs help now more than ever. We particularly need to understand and protect nature in our cities; monitoring its changes is vital.

We're working to give people across the UK, no matter who they are or where they live, the

motivation and tools to safeguard nature in towns and cities, so that people and planet can thrive.

The Museum's five-acre site in South Kensington is being transformed into a welcoming, accessible and biologically diverse green space in the heart of London.

New outdoor galleries will showcase the Museum's scientific research and provide a space for the public to learn about the incredible diversity of life on Earth and how our planet has changed over time. Access to

the garden will also be improved, with universal step-free routes across the site.

The gardens will become a hub for urban nature identification and field survey skills. We are piloting a range of technologies for monitoring

change in urban environments, including environmental DNA (eDNA) and acoustic monitoring.

The existing Wildlife Garden will be extended to double the area of native habitats within the grounds, providing a fabulous setting for our historic building.

Museum staff are also working with organisations across the UK to inspire the next generation, create new opportunities for young people in cities and help everyone to learn about humanity's impact on the natural world.

We've launched a fundraising appeal to give the public the opportunity to support this historic project and make their mark on the Museum. Keep reading for further details.

EARLY BEGINNINGS OF THE MUSEUM

The Museum first opened its doors on 18 April 1881, but its origins stretch back to 1753 and the career of Sir Hans Sloane, a doctor and collector.



Collaborating with The Prince's Trust to develop resources for Youth Workers



Sir Hans Sloane

Sloane travelled the world as a high society physician. He collected natural history specimens and cultural artefacts along the way.

After his death in 1753, Sloane's will allowed Parliament to buy his extensive collection of more than 71,000 items for £20,000 – significantly less than its estimated value.

The government agreed to purchase Sloane's collection and then built the British Museum so these items could be displayed to the public.

The collection remained part of the British Museum until 1963, when a separate board of trustees was appointed, but it wasn't officially renamed the Natural History Museum until 1992.

In 1856 Sir Richard Owen – the natural scientist who came up with the name for dinosaurs – left his role as curator of the Hunterian Museum and took charge of the British Museum's natural history collection.

Unhappy with the lack of space for its ever-growing collection of natural history specimens, Owen convinced the British Museum's board of trustees that a separate building was needed to house these national treasures.

In 1864 Francis Fowke, the architect who designed the Royal Albert Hall and parts of the Victoria and Albert Museum, won a competition to design the Natural History Museum.

When he unexpectedly died a year

later, the relatively unknown Alfred Waterhouse took over and came up with a new plan for the South Kensington site.

Waterhouse used terracotta for the entire building as this material was more resistant to Victorian London's harsh climate.

The result is one of Britain's most striking examples of Romanesque architecture, which is considered a work of art in its own right and has become one of London's most iconic landmarks.

THE MODERN MUSEUM

In 1986, the Museum absorbed the adjacent Geological Museum of the British Geological Survey and its collection of more than 30,000 minerals. The Lasting Impressions gallery opened three years later to connect the two buildings.

The Darwin Centre opened to the public in 2009 and houses the Museum's historic collections as well as its working scientists. The centre's unique Cocoon structure displays the Museum's most important plant and insect specimen collections, and is equipped with state-of-the-art research facilities used by more than 200 scientists.

Visitors can watch our scientists work in open-plan laboratories, where they study everything from the cocoa that Sloane brought back from Jamaica in the seventeenth century to malaria-carrying mosquitoes collected in 2008.

Hintze Hall, the Museum's central space, was redeveloped in 2017. The Diplodocus skeleton cast was replaced with a 25.2-metre blue whale skeleton. It is intended to be a reminder to visitors that humanity has a responsibility to protect the biodiversity of our planet.

And now we're heading into an exciting phase for the Museum with the landmark Urban Nature Project – turning the Museum's five-acre site into an accessible, welcoming and biologically diverse green space in

the heart of London, free to access for generations to come.

HISTORY OF THE GARDENS

The Natural History Museum first opened its doors on 18 April 1881, providing a permanent home for the ever-growing collection of natural history specimens originally housed in the British Museum.

Originally the Museum gardens were an area set aside for future expansion of the building. There was no intention to open them to the public. However, a lack of money resulted in a smaller

Headline image RIBA 1869



building than planned and a need to landscape the gardens.

The east and west outdoor spaces started as formal gardens, but the addition of winding paths on the west side (now home to the Wildlife Garden) gave it a more natural feel.

Through the years the two sides of the garden continued to develop independently.

Here are a few key milestones in the development of the gardens over the years:

1871

A large landscaped garden existed in South Kensington before the Natural History Museum was built. The garden was opened in the 1860s and maintained by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS).

1881

The Natural History Museum opened to the public on 18 April. A sense of how it looked upon opening can be seen in the photo above which was taken in 1900. This

is around the same time that the plane trees were planted on site.

1914-18

To support the wellbeing of troops during the First World War, the Museum turned part of its gardens into allotments and a farm. The allotments grew potatoes, artichokes, cauliflowers and other green crops. The farm also boasted chickens, rabbits and eight pedigree black Sussex pigs.

1938

Whale carcasses were buried in sandpits between 1913 and 1938 in the northwest corner of the gardens, roughly where the Darwin Centre is now.

They were left to decompose so that their skeletons could be added to the collection. In the photograph below (sperm-whale-burial), Museum staff are digging up a sperm whale, before cleaning and

site of the tennis courts and the wartime bunker.

A portion of the west garden was given a new purpose in 1995 – as a place to put habitat creation and wildlife conservation into practice, where Museum visitors could learn about UK wildlife and where naturalists, students and Museum scientists could carry out research.

In an area covering a single acre, a mosaic of woodland, grassland, scrub, heath, fen, aquatic, reedbed, hedgerow and urban UK habitats was created.

The Wildlife Garden opened to the public on 10 July 1995.

2020 – now

Today, the gardens remain two distinct areas – the open and more formal east, and the winding woodland and other habitats that make up the Wildlife Garden.

Plans for a major renovation project to turn the Museum's five-acre site into a welcoming, accessible and biologically diverse green space in the heart of London were approved in 2020 and works began this autumn to realise their potential. The gardens will remain closed to the public until completion of construction in autumn

2023.

FOSSIL TREE

One of the more unusual items in the Museum's gardens is the



fossilised tree – a large petrified tree that lived around 330 million years ago – which has been towering over visitors to the Museum for over 130 years, making it one of the longest-serving exhibits.

The tree (above) originally came from Craigleith Quarry – once the largest and most productive quarry in Edinburgh. The site is also well known for fossil trees. The trunk that now resides on the Museum's east lawn was uncovered in 1873, found approximately 56 metres below the surface.

The fossil tree, *Pitys withamii*, lived during the Carboniferous Period, which lasted from around 359 to 299 million years ago.

The trunk has been housed in the Museum's gardens for over 130 years, although it hasn't always been in the same spot.

The tree arrived at the Museum in six large pieces with numerous



placing the bones in the research collection, where they remain to this day.

1939

In 1939 a bunker was built beneath the gardens as a home for a regional war control room. After the war, this room was sealed. It remained closed until 1976 when the land was needed for a new extension to the main Museum building.

The area was then occupied by a tennis court from around 1950.

1976

Completed in 1976, the Palaeontology Building was the first major building project on the east side of the grounds. It covered the



Paths winding through the current Wildlife Garden

smaller fragments, and originally the trunk was displayed lying on its side. The section of the specimen on display today towers over visitors at six metres tall, but with all the pieces laid out together it measured around 12 metres.

The wood is petrified, meaning that it has been turned to stone. For petrified wood to form, organic material is replaced by minerals – in this case iron and calcium carbonates – while the plant retains its original shape and structure. This fossilisation process has increased the weight of the specimen's trunk to around three times that of normal wood. Its exact weight isn't known, but is estimated at around eleven tonnes.

The tree was stood upright in 1887, but only the large pieces were assembled. It remained standing until November 1940, when it was knocked down and broken into several pieces by an air raid bomb.

The tree has been in its current position since the 1970s, and will be retained during the redevelopment of the gardens for the Urban Nature Project.

PLANS FOR THE GARDENS

THE EAST GARDENS

– THE STORY OF LIFE ON EARTH:

An immersive evolution timeline of plants and geology will take

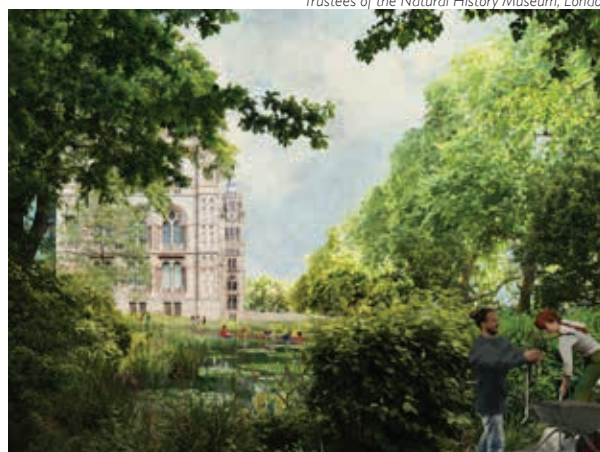
visitors on a journey from the very beginnings of life on Earth, through to the present day. A new weatherproof cast of the Museum's much-loved dinosaur, Dippy, will take centre stage in a Jurassic Garden filled with tree ferns and cycads.

Visitors will be able to walk in the footsteps of the evolving life on Earth and become immersed in a landscape that gradually fills with plants, trees, reptiles, birds and mammals (including humans).

By understanding changes that have occurred on our planet in the past and how life responded, we can plan for the future.

Formal and informal seating among the planting and geology will give visitors the opportunity to rest and immerse themselves in nature.

Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London



THE WEST GARDENS

– AN EXPANSION OF THE NATURAL AREAS:

The size of the natural area will be increased along with the range of habitats in our grounds with the aim of providing much-needed resource for local biodiversity.

Visitors will be able to find out about the extraordinary wildlife right on our doorstep that our scientists are studying, and will discover a living research laboratory, an urban space teeming with life, where they can learn how to gather information about the changing environment.

SUSTAINABILITY

Creating a sustainable design that works with the landscape is at the heart of the redevelopment. With an ambitious approach to

sustainable construction, the project aims to have a positive impact on the environment.

We aim to:

- deliver a project which removes more carbon from the atmosphere than it contributes.
- reduce and limit energy consumption and design energy efficient buildings, using 100% renewable energy during construction and beyond.
- create a zero-waste garden and ensure no waste from the construction of the gardens goes to landfill.
- reduce water consumption and design to minimise water waste.
- source materials responsibly and aim to use 100% certified sustainable materials from the

UK. When that's not possible we'll have a strong justification for a material's use.

- care for biodiversity across the garden and elsewhere. We'll grow the plants coming into the garden in the UK as much as possible. Areas for nature to thrive in the garden will be increased.

- improve well-being for staff, volunteers and visitors by designing spaces with well-being

in mind, providing spaces within the garden for reflection and relaxation, and ensuring mental health support is available for all.

PLANTING THE GARDEN

The planting in the gardens will create an immersive, educational experience for visitors telling the story of Deep Time, from the Cambrian period 540 million years ago to the present day. Early time periods will be characterised by low level planting – mosses and liverworts – amongst rocks from the relevant geological period. Moving west, larger plants begin to appear – horsetails and tree ferns – growing further still into the Jurassic period where Wollemi pines and cycads will accompany a new weatherproof cast of the Museum's ever-popular dinosaur, Dippy.





Head of NHM Gardens Tom McCarter and Museum Director Doug Gurr help transport pond wildlife to temporary homes

'Future nature' will also be explored in the grounds, trialling new species that we expect will soon be able to thrive in urban areas due to the microclimate and increasing temperatures.

THE WILDLIFE POND

One of the main features of our Wildlife Garden is of course the pond system, home to many plants and animal species that use our gardens as a refuge in the busy city. As part of the Urban Nature Project, the existing pond will increase in size by 20%, completely reinvigorating the wetland system to provide even more space for wildlife to thrive.

In September this year we celebrated the start of works in the garden with a groundbreaking ceremony focussed around our work on the pond.

To help preserve the gardens' biodiversity, a team headed up by Tom McCarter, Head of Natural History Museum Gardens, worked to collect plants from the current ponds so that they can be replanted after the construction period. To protect aquatic biodiversity, water, plants, invertebrates and sediment will be stored in temporary homes over the winter, allowing them to thrive when moved back to new ponds in spring.

Tom McCarter, Head of NHM Gardens said "The Urban Nature Project will allow visitors to explore the Museum in a new way, reconnecting them with the outdoors and giving them the tools to safeguard nature in towns and cities, so that people and planet can thrive. It's an exciting new chapter for our gardens, redeveloping an outdoor space that has been in South Kensington for more than 130 years".

Through the Urban Nature Project, the Museum's existing Wildlife Garden will be extended to double the area of native habitats within the grounds, with the aim of better supporting, monitoring and managing the animal and plant life diversity.

The gardens, opening next autumn, will also be home to scientific sensors gathering environmental DNA and acoustic data, to monitor, understand and protect urban nature.

THE NEW LEARNING AND ACTIVITY CENTRE

The Learning and Activity Centre (right) will combine vital facilities for scientific work, monitoring, learning activities, maintenance and supporting the volunteer

community that is key to the upkeep of the gardens.

The new building will provide a much-needed classroom space for year-round learning with immediate connection to outdoor learning activities, together with improved staff facilities including a work area, a mess room, garden tool storage and yard space.

The new centre will provide a clear and welcoming threshold area to the gardens, communicating the scientific significance and purpose of the Wildlife Garden.

ENGAGING WITH OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

We're working with community groups in the local area to engage them in the project and raise awareness of the value of nature in cities. Here are a few examples:

ANANSE:

We have been connecting with our local community to help shape what goes into the new activities in the gardens, what stories of people, plants and animals should be shared, and how the activities should look and feel.

Working with storyteller Mama D of Community Centred Knowledge, we created a self-guided activity trail for the gardens that takes audiences on a journey around some of the trees in the Wildlife Garden. The theme of the trail links to a well-known Ananse story, and participating families are invited to help Ananse by gathering the common-sense wisdom of the trees in the gardens.

The trail aims to create a fun experience for families in the





Museum's gardens. They'll learn the names of some common trees, engage with the cultural and ecological significance of trees and enjoy stories from the global south.

CHILDREN'S ART WORKSHOPS

During workshops with brilliant artists aged 8-11, of West African and Caribbean heritage from St Thomas CE Primary School we collaboratively created a storyboard and visuals for the Ananse film.



Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London

GROW2KNOW

We're also working with Grow2Know and the Lancaster West Neighbourhood Team, to create a new community garden space on Lancaster West Estate, adding to the biodiversity in our neighbourhood, Kensington.

Museum scientists are undertaking regular visits to explore this newly planted prairie garden space garden with the local community and uncover its diversity of species.

This summer residents at Lancaster West met with Grow2Know and Museum staff scientists to take

part in communal planting, and celebrate biodiversity and the mini beasts found in the garden.

WHAT'S COMING NEXT FOR UNP

The Museum gardens closed to the public in September 2022 to start the ambitious renovation project, and will re-open when construction completes in late 2023.

During this time there will be plenty of opportunities to find out more about what's happening and get involved, please see below details for how to stay in touch.



Pond dipping

MAKE YOUR MARK ON THE MUSEUM'S GARDENS

Everyone can play a part in giving nature a helping hand. Join our urban biodiversity movement today. The Museum has launched a fundraising appeal to raise money for its Urban Nature Project. Those wanting to support the project can donate any amount they can online or alternatively can

- Donate £50 to sponsor a square metre of the garden
- Donate £250 to engrave a name on the jetty railings
- Donate £500 to engrave a name with a symbol of nature on garden railings
- Donate £5,000 – £10,000 to engrave a name on a long or standalone bench

Whether you choose to sponsor a square metre of garden or have the name of a loved one engraved on a bench, any donation will have a lasting impact on the Museum gardens, all in support of urban nature.

You can find out more and donate to the Urban Nature Project at www.nhm.ac.uk/support-us/urban-nature-project/donate.html

JOIN THE URBAN NATURE MOVEMENT

There are lots of ways you can get involved as the project progresses.

Take part in our community science projects – we run seasonal nature tracking projects where you can

submit photos you've taken of wildlife while out enjoying nature, and contribute to our Museum scientists' understanding of the behaviour and spread of wildlife in the UK. You can find out more about our latest seasonal nature tracker project by visiting our social media channels.

Follow us on social media to stay up to date on the Urban Nature Project:

facebook.com/naturalhistorymuseum

twitter.com/NHM_London

instagram.com/natural_history_museum

youtube.com/naturalhistorymuseum

You can also join our e-mail mailing list for updates: www.nhm.ac.uk/visit/exhibitions/email-sign-up.html

FIND OUT MORE

To find out more about the Urban Nature Project, see the full plans for the gardens and keep up to date with progress please visit www.nhm.ac.uk/about-us/urban-nature-project.html

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE TUBE and THE PICCADILLY LINE

Nigel Cox

©TfL from the London Transport Museum collection



Construction of the Metropolitan Line

2017 saw the closure of the main entrances to Knightsbridge Station at the corner of Brompton Road and Sloane Street and the beginning of a major redevelopment, now due to be completed early in 2023. Curiously this involves the restoration of some long-suppressed features of the earliest station. This article looks at the project in the context of the history of the Tube in Knightsbridge.

EARLY DAYS

The Tube first came to Knightsbridge in 1906. London had been the first city in the world to have an underground railway: in 1863 the Metropolitan Railway opened its first line, from Paddington (Bishop's Road) to Farringdon. (The 79-year old

Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, declined to join a ceremonial tour of the line on the grounds that he hoped to stay above ground a little longer. He died in 1865.)

This was followed in 1868 by the Metropolitan District Railway, joining South Kensington and Westminster. These, like other early lines, used ordinary steam engines and were created not by tunnelling but by the 'cut-and-cover' method: the road was dug up and tracks laid in a brick cutting, which was then roofed over and the road reinstalled. By 1884 the Circle Line had been completed.

In the 1890s new lines were made by tunnelling, using technology developed by Marc Isambard Brunel for the tunnel under the Thames between Rotherhithe

and Wapping, completed in 1843 (and believed to be the world's first under-river tunnel): a moving iron shield to support the roof

Creative Commons



*Main Knightsbridge Station Entrance
1934–2017*



*Metropolitan Line
Train in 1863*

of the tunnel as the workers dug it forwards, with bricklayers following behind to line it. This had been refined by James Greathead to allow for a layer of concrete to be poured as the earth was dug. The Greathead shields used for underground lines were circular, resulting in circular tunnels. Tunnelling through the London clay proved relatively straightforward. (The geological conditions of New York, which began constructing its subway in 1900, proved more challenging.)

The first such 'Tube' line opened in 1890, operating new electric trains between King William Street in the City and Elephant and Castle, south of the river. Nearer to Knightsbridge, the Central London Railway, now Central Line, opened between

Shepherd's Bush and Liverpool Street in 1900.

By 1900 London's population was about 6.5 million, nearly double that of 1860. Despite the contribution of existing underground lines, as well as horse-drawn omnibuses and trams, and from the 1880s electric trams, traffic congestion was acute. Particularly as the boroughs of Kensington and Westminster did not allow electric trams, proposals for new underground lines now included what would become the Piccadilly line.

Charles Tyson Yerkes, a colourful American entrepreneur who had served a prison sentence in the US when one of his schemes there collapsed, successfully manoeuvred to win control of

this and other projects (including what are now the Bakerloo and Northern lines). John Pierpont Morgan was one of his disappointed rivals for the London lines. (Another rival had committed suicide with a cyanide pill in the Law Courts in 1904 after being sentenced to seven years penal servitude for larceny.)

These lines, like their predecessors, were entirely privately funded, with some 60% of the capital coming from US investors.

Digging of Yerkes's 'Great Northern, Piccadilly and Brompton Railway' began in 1902, using Price rotary excavators, whose electric-powered knives cut through the clay and deposited it on a chute for removal.

Services from Hammersmith to Finsbury Park – via Knightsbridge – started in 1906. David Lloyd George, President of the Board of Trade (later Prime Minister) started the first train – though the gold key he had been given for the ceremony did not work, and he had to borrow a foreman's iron key instead. The electricity was provided by the company's new Lots Road power station. Yerkes (who died, with heavy debts, a year before the railway's completion) had persuaded

©TfL from the London Transport Museum collection



Piccadilly Line Train c.1906

the Board of Trade to support his favoured option of direct current via a conductor rail, rather than the alternating current by overhead wires preferred by the Metropolitan District railway.

The line's name soon became simplified to 'the Piccadilly line', but the old initials 'G.N.P. and B.Ry' can still be seen in places, for example on the façade of Holloway Road Station.

Between Hammersmith and South Kensington stations, the new railway mostly tunnelled below the existing District line, but it then broke new ground, with stations at Brompton Road (just west of Brompton Square), Knightsbridge, Hyde Park Corner, Down Street, Dover Street (now Green Park), Piccadilly Circus and beyond.

There is a legend that the line curves away from the road near the Brompton Oratory to avoid an old plague pit (a burial site for 17th Century victims of plague), but historians have found no evidence of this. In any case the tunnel is at least 40 feet or 12 metres below the surface, so would have been far beneath any burial place.

Unlike the Paris Metro, whose first line opened in 1900, all the stations originally included buildings above ground. These, designed by Leslie Green (1875–1908), were steel-framed and tiled in a distinctive glazed oxblood faience (still visible at most stations today). Most were built as two storeys, but with flat roofs to allow for office development above.

The first cars on the Piccadilly line were imported from France and Hungary. They were painted crimson on the outside and the seats were upholstered with yellow rattan. Passenger access was initially controlled by a 'gateman', stationed on the gangway platform between each car (air-operated doors were introduced between 1919 and



Brompton Road in 1902

1930). The cars had full windows, unlike the first tube trains, which only had high slit windows, and the tunnels were initially lit to allow passengers to see the tube walls. Fares ranged from one penny to fourpence.

The project did not prove financially rewarding: passenger figures in the first year of operation were just 26 million, under half the projected 60 million. The Underground also soon faced serious competition from motor buses. In 1907 the Piccadilly railway came close to bankruptcy but was saved by a radical financial restructuring, and by 1910 was paying a small dividend. Passenger numbers increased sharply during the First World War – which also saw the first women railway workers.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE STATION

By 1900 the Brompton Road already boasted three large department stores – Harrods, Harvey Nichols and Woollands (closed in 1967, and replaced by the Sheraton Park Tower Hotel), but the opening of the new tube line and particularly Knightsbridge station greatly accelerated the area's development as a top-class shopping centre.

The original above-ground Knightsbridge station was a classic Leslie Green two-storey building, with one entrance at 29-31 Brompton Road, east of Hooper's Court, and another on the corner of Hooper's Court and Basil Street (where the oxblood tiling may still be seen). The



*Knightsbridge Station
c.1906-1908*



Basil Street Entrance 1925

©TfL from the London Transport Museum collection



Knightsbridge Station 1925

platforms were served by four US-made Otis lifts. Offices or flats were later built above the station.

During the early 1930s Government grants enabled the Underground company to extend the Piccadilly line to Hounslow, Uxbridge and Cockfosters and to modernise many central stations with the replacement of lifts by escalators. (London's first Underground escalator had been installed at Earl's Court Station, between the Piccadilly and District line platforms in 1911 – on its first day of operation a one-legged man was seen to go up and down the escalators repeatedly: some thought he

was part of an advertising stunt by the line; others that he was a cautionary example of what might happen if one used the escalator injudiciously.)

At Knightsbridge the installation of escalators involved the construction of a new underground ticket hall beneath the junction of Brompton Road, Knightsbridge and Sloane Street. New entrances (used until 2017) were created in the corner building on the southern side of the junction and from the northern and southern pavements east of Sloane Street; the previous entrances and lifts were closed; and the



Old Booking Hall 1927

old above-ground station was redeveloped.

At the same time a new entrance was built on the corner of Hans Crescent, opposite Harrods. (This was redeveloped and moved east in 2004 to ease congestion in the long subway leading to the escalators. The old corner entrance is now part of the clothes shop, Zara.)

In 1933, most of London's underground railways, tramway and bus services, including the Piccadilly line, were merged to form the London Passenger Transport Board or London Transport. The company was nationalised in 1948 and in 2000 became part of the new Transport for London (TfL).

In 2010 a new station entrance was opened on the north side of Knightsbridge as part of the One Hyde Park development.

RECENT REDEVELOPMENT OF KNIGHTSBRIDGE STATION

The recent transformation began in 2017 as part of the redevelopment by the Chelsfield group of the Knightsbridge Estate's huge K1 site bounded by the Brompton Road, Sloane Street, Basil Street and Hooper's Court. They agreed to meet most of the costs of modernising the station to provide step-free access by re-installing lifts and reinstating an entrance in Hooper's Court as well as one at 15 Brompton Road. TfL's own

HOOPER'S COURT was closed during the construction works. It dates back to the 1760s when the first extensive building took place along this part of the Brompton Road. The Court, leading from Brompton Road through to Lord Cadogan's lands behind, was constructed by John Hooper, a local gardener, and William Meymott, a Southwark-based carpenter and builder. It was originally T-shaped and consisted of small houses and stables, some enjoying good southerly views until Basil Street (originally North Street) was built in the 1790s.

The new entrance at 15 Brompton Road opened in [October?] 2022, and the opening of the Hooper Court entrance is now scheduled for early 2023.

Knightsbridge Station is used by some 19 million passengers a year – an average of 52,000 each day.



One Hyde Park

further west. The original entrance then became the 258th Lyons teasshop. Then, for some 30 years to 2010, it housed Pizza on the Park, a famous venue for live jazz. In 2013 the £16 million Wellesley Hotel opened on the site, preserving the ox-blood tiles.

There is a crossover tunnel to the east of the station, allowing it to be used as the terminus for the western part of the Piccadilly line when the central part is closed.

ABANDONED STATIONS

Two of the stations between South Kensington and Piccadilly Circus only survived until the 1930s. Down Street (1932) and

costs were budgeted at £12 million.

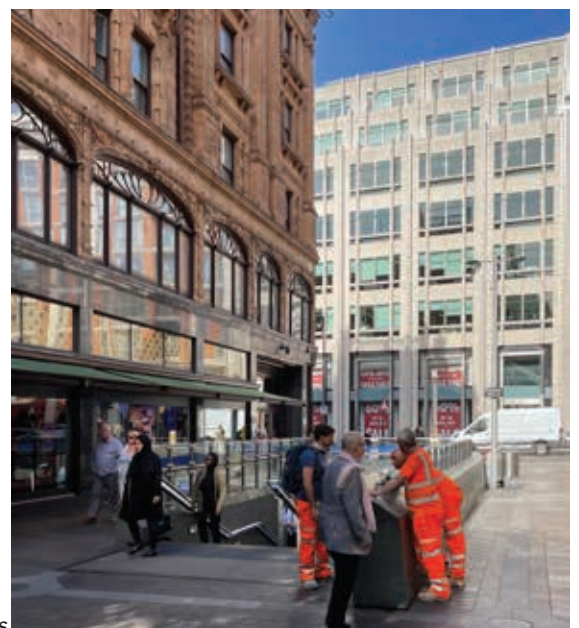
The London Underground construction team began work in autumn 2018. They were able to make use of some of the station's old disused tunnels and lift shafts to install the two new 17-person lifts.

HYDE PARK CORNER STATION

The Hyde Park Corner Station also opened in 1906, with an above ground entrance at 11 Knightsbridge. A five-storey

hotel, originally the Hyde Park Corner Hotel, was built above it, using the central arch for its entrance. This was later renamed Sartori's Park View Hotel and continued to operate, latterly as the Park View Hotel, until the 1950s.

In 1932 the Station was redeveloped with escalators and a sub-surface ticket hall, entered from staircases on both sides of Knightsbridge



Entrance by Harrods



Hyde Park Corner Station 1925



Wellseley Hotel

Brompton Road (1934) were then both closed, on the grounds that they were close to other stations (though not as close as Leicester Square and Covent Garden, which are only 800 feet or 243 metres apart), and their removal would speed up long journeys at a time when the line was being extended at both ends.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill reportedly visited operations here. When Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, flew to Scotland in 1941, apparently to seek peace talks, he was brought here for interrogation.

In the 1950s, as old air defence systems became obsolete, the building was cleared. It was then

used by Territorial Army and other military units, including the London University Air Squadron. A plan in 1987 to rebuild it as a civil defence bunker and emergency coordination centre in case of nuclear attack came to nothing.

Finally in 2013 the Ministry of Defence succeeded in selling

BROMPTON ROAD STATION

From 1909 only alternate trains had called at Brompton Road, with the guard's warning cry "Passing Brompton Road" becoming as familiar as "Mind the Gap" inspiring the title of a play in 1928. After the Hans Crescent entrance to Knightsbridge station opened in 1932 the station's fate was sealed.

In 1938 the War Office took over the station as a possible command bunker, and during the Second World War, despite earlier plans to use it for storing treasures from the Victoria and Albert Museum, it served as Headquarters of the 1st Anti-Aircraft Division, helping to protect London against Luftwaffe bombing, notably the Blitz (1940-1941).



Sloane Street/Brompton Road Corner Today



New Brompton Road Entrance

the site (some 28,000 square feet or a third of an acre) for £53 million to a Ukrainian billionaire, Dmytro Firtash. He reportedly outbid a member of the Qatari Royal Family and planned to build luxury apartments on the site.

His existing homes include Somerset Maugham's former Villa Mauresque at St Jean Cap Ferrat.

Despite representations by the Knightsbridge Association, English Heritage had declined to list the station building. However the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea ruled that its one surviving oxblood tiled façade on Cottage Place contributed to the character of the Brompton Conservation Area and should be preserved. (This was originally the staff entrance to the station, which

was constructed in an L-shape round the Gladstone public house on the corner; the pub and Brompton Road entrance façade were demolished in 1971/1972.)

In practice, however, no development of the site has yet begun. Mr Firtash has been unable to leave Vienna, where he has been fighting various legal cases, notably a US extradition request on charges of bribery, racketeering and money-laundering in connection with organised crime, as well as a Spanish arrest warrant. He was arrested but released on bail of €125 million. He seems unlikely to be seen in Knightsbridge in the near future.

DOWN STREET STATION

The Down Street Station was also prepared for wartime use, with installation of a bomb-proof steel cap. During the Second World War it was mainly used as a shelter for the Railway Executive Committee, which controlled the operation of Britain's railways, but also for a time during the Blitz Churchill and his War Cabinet also used it, while work was undertaken to strengthen the Cabinet War Rooms defences.



Brompton Road Station 1925 (left) and 1934 (below left)

©TfL from the London Transport Museum collection



Side Façade of the Old Brompton Road Station today



Old Down Street Station

Since the War the station has been used only for engineering access to the Underground and as an emergency exit, and for occasional filming, with a convenience shop at ground level.

WORLD WAR II

Knightsbridge Station, like other deep tube stations, was used as a public air-raid shelter during the War, especially during the Blitz in 1940-1941 and the V-bomb attacks in 1944. Hyde Park Station had to be closed at one point, when an unexploded bomb fell on it, but it was soon successfully defused and removed.

SMOKING ON THE TUBE

Smoking was allowed in certain carriages on the Underground until 1984. Smoking at stations was not banned until 1987.

STATION BUFFETS

Sadly none of the Piccadilly line stations ever offered a bar on

the platforms. Some did include licensed premises, but the only platform bars were at Liverpool Street (Metropolitan line westbound) and Sloane Square (District Line westbound – the 'Hole in the Wall' closed in 1985).

CONCLUSION

The London Underground is today a much more efficient, comfortable and convenient system than at any previous time. It may seem ironic that the modernisation of the Knightsbridge Station should involve the re-installation of features – lifts and an entrance in Hooper's Court – which were part of the original design but suppressed in the 1930s. However the net result – the

combination of step-free access, modern lifts, swift escalators and spacious circulation areas – should be welcome both to local residents and to those who work in the area or visit.



Façade of Down Street today

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Built behind the retained and restored historic facades, this ambitious project is delivering: seven flagship retail stores, a 67,000 sq ft office building named One Hooper's Court, 33 luxury rental apartments, and a destination roof-top restaurant with a ground floor café.

Over the summer Apple launched a new flagship retail store at 17-27 Brompton Road to join Burberry who opened last year.

Major improvements to the public realm have also been delivered, including widened pavements on Brompton Road and Sloane Street and a new entrance to Knightsbridge tube station. Works are ongoing to provide the much needed step-free access to the platforms from the pedestrian walkway Hooper's Court.

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A CHAT ABOUT PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

What makes Darcy stand apart from other companies? What's your USP?

It would without a doubt be our hands-on approach. We always deal with clients in person and really all our best work is based their feedback and what their needs are. If there are issues that need to be addressed in a building, we will always see to it personally, visiting along with the builders, surveyors or anyone else we need to complete a job. It is the bespoke nature of our service that fosters genuine sense of loyalty between us and the buildings we take care of.

What are your core values?

We think there is really only one core value which needs to take precedence above anything else: honesty. We don't believe in making excuses or telling our clients the truth only when it is convenient. With the backbone of our business being based in forging strong relationships with clients

and the trust implicit in that, it is so important to us that we get this right.

What do you pride yourself on?

I think everything I was referring to earlier, especially the personable, hands-on aspect of our work. But more than that I think the fact that we never lost sight of this intimate, boutique approach to our business and the high level of quality that it entails despite our continued growth as a company. It is this standard of excellence that sets us apart from our competitors.

What's the biggest lesson you've learned working in this field?

Without a doubt, it has to be the skill of dealing with people who could not be from a more diverse set of backgrounds and could not vary more in their cultures and personalities. Having all of these dynamic subsets, many times in the same space teaches you flexibility, patience, and empathy, which you can absolutely take with you into other areas of your life.

What advice would you give to those who want to do what you do?

To stay honest and direct with all the people they need to work with in this field. Avoiding misunderstandings and misrepresentations is the important first step in making property management the collaborative business it is supposed to be.

What does the future hold for Darcy?

Of course, we would love to expand even more with new buildings and new people in our company and to grow even bigger. But when you asked what I pride myself on, it was being able to do all of these things while maintaining the integrity and sense of caring that made our company so special in the first place.

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MEET THE WOMEN WHO ARE CHALLENGING THE NORM

Badra is one of the few women working in an operations role, and is proud to be an ambassador for women across the industry

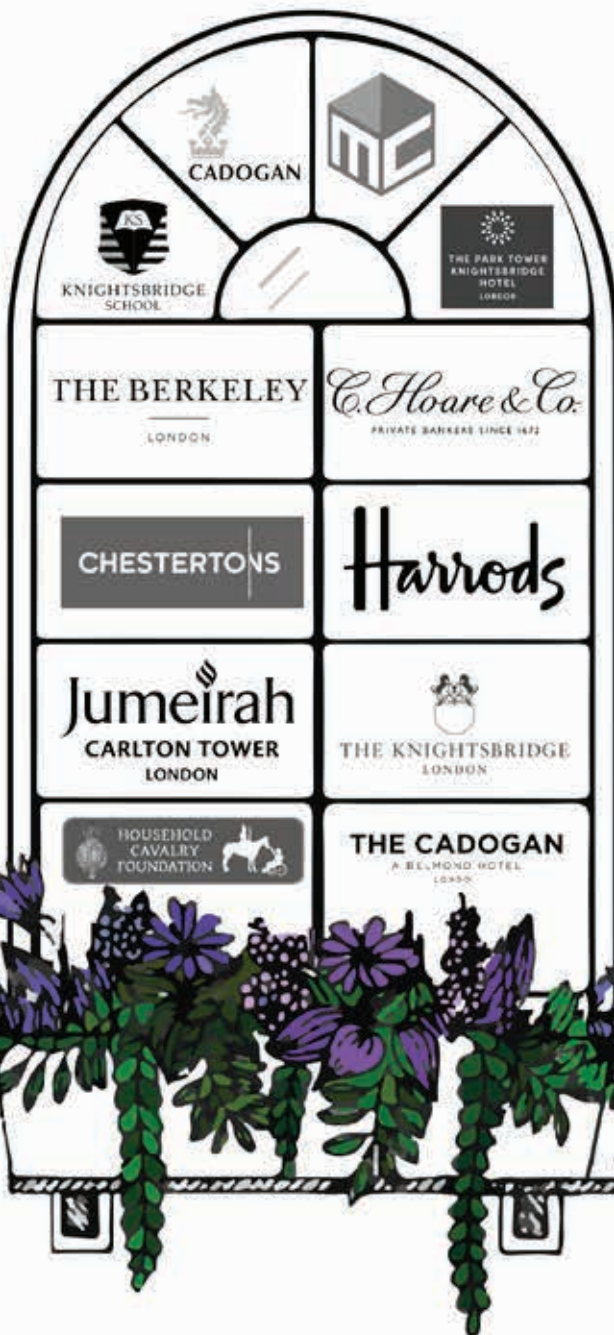
Working as a Street Cleansing Team Leader at Veolia in Westminster, Badra is one of the few women working in an operations role. "I'm looking forward to the future to promote women who are under-represented in the job, there are a lot of men in this industry, and I want to be part of the change we are beginning to see."

Veolia are proud to support women like Badra in Knightsbridge and across Westminster.

Veolia operates the Westminster City Council Commercial Waste Services, providing full-solution services that adapt to the needs of the environment. For more information on low-cost, efficient and environmentally-friendly resource management, visit westminster.gov.uk/commercialwaste



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