

# 59th ANNUAL REPORT

## December 2020



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ASSOCIATION

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# Zia Teresa

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NVP

## The boutique estate agency in the heart of Knightsbridge

Many of us will be keen to see the back of 2020, thanks to the global pandemic which has turned our lives upside down. But if any good has come out of it, it is a renewed sense of the importance of community, even in a vast, global city, such as London.

This is certainly the case in Knightsbridge, where Nicolas Van Patrick (NVP) marked its sixth anniversary this year. Incorporating Hobart Slater, which has been operating out of Montpelier Street since 1981, NVP is the leading boutique estate agency in Knightsbridge.

Unlike bigger, national estate agency brands, NVP is able to offer a local, bespoke service, coupled with unparalleled market knowledge. Nicolas Pejacsevich and Patrick Alvarado, along with their team of Knightsbridge specialists, boast a combined local knowledge and agency experience of more than 100 years. Between them they are fluent in six

languages, giving clients the utmost in personal service and providing the best advice for those selling and letting.

"NVP has a vested interest in Knightsbridge thriving," says Nicolas, "Rather than talking up the market in order to beat other agents to the instruction, we are realistic as to what can be achieved and work with clients to get the best possible price for their property."

The team at NVP invite you to drop in for a socially-distanced chat at their Montpelier Street premises, or call or email them for any advice you may need about the market.



Patrick Alvarado & Nicolas Pejacsevich



Our previous office on Montpelier Street

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**KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION**

- ❖ The Knightsbridge Association is recognised by The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the City of Westminster as the consultative body for the Knightsbridge area.
- ❖ Find out what is happening on key local issues in the area.
- ❖ If you live in the Knightsbridge area, please join us!

*More details from*  
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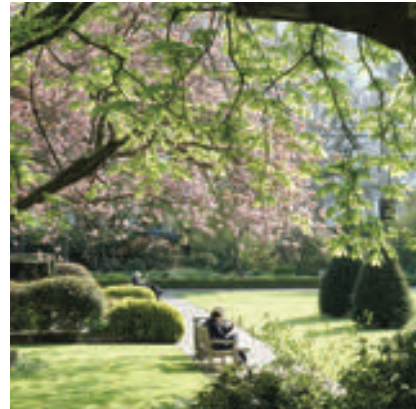


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# THE CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW



*Planned celebrations in 2021 for the Royal Albert Hall's 150th Anniversary include the return of the Proms*

Writing in November with the gloom of a second lockdown upon us, I looked to Pericles, democracy's advocate and great orator of the ancient world, for positive inspiration. He broke tradition by delivering a eulogy 'glorifying' Athens itself rather than a backward-looking celebration of great martial achievements. In Knightsbridge today, we are on the verge of banishing the scaffolding and hoardings that have scarred the Brompton Road townscape for so long. As the major developments at K1 and 55-91 Knightsbridge emerge from their chrysalises, they reveal identities we will live with for the next fifty years.

Renewal is taking place in other quarters. For those who walked around the bandstand in Hyde Park over the summer, you may have noticed deep excavation in an adjacent, fenced-off area. This was the spot where the yellow polyethylene gas main liners were fed into an opening in the old cast iron main and rammed hydraulically down the old pipe as far as Hyde Park corner. Passing the bandstand with my spaniel early one morning, staccato rhythms of a Tango rang out

from a gramophone located near the works. A dance couple zigzagged across the bandstand floor in a snapshot of 'magic realism': were we in Hyde Park or outside the Casa Rosada?

For those with their feet on the ground, similar excavations at Brompton Cross and 'Scotch Corner' were a reminder that this vital work causes great traffic disruption as the gas mains replacement programme wends its way from Fulham up to Hyde Park Corner, Marble Arch and beyond. Completion in our area is scheduled for 2022 and, for those interested, there is more about the history of gas use in central London on pages 42–44.

As foreshadowed in the Autumn newsletter, economic slowdown has been accompanied by administrative acceleration. Over the last ten months the Association has or will be submitting a great number of responses to: The Royal Parks' Movement Strategy; RBKC's Basil Street closure consultation; Westminster's Temporary Movement strategy; TfL's South Kensington Around Station Development Planning Statement; Westminster's

Licensing Policy and Cumulative Impact Assessment consultation; Westminster's Busking Strategy; and lastly the Planning White Paper from central Government. The last of these is probably the most significant issue facing the Association this year.

Looking back five years at KA's own Planning and Conservation committee minutes, it is striking how the emphasis has shifted from commenting on individual Planning and Licensing applications, which we continue to do, to responding on broader policy issues. Each consultation requires careful consideration and I would like to take this opportunity to thank those in the Association who devote their time to understanding the issues, drafting well-argued responses and following up with councillors and officials in support of residents' interests.

The Planning White Paper ('PWP') is set to introduce radical change. Two issues are of particular concern to us. First, the categorisation of areas into three planning zones defined as Protected, Renewal and Growth. The Association believes

that Conservation Areas need to be included within the Protected category, but this has not been established at time of writing. Effective 1 September this year, the 1987 Use Classes Order was changed to include a new Use Class E. This latter provision will have a big impact on High Streets – Knightsbridge in particular – by allowing interchangeability between retail, restaurant, office, professional services etc without the need for a new planning consent.

The London Forum of Amenity Societies supports the principles underlying the PWP but has expressed concerns that residents' interests are being subordinated to those of developers. Your Association supports this view, particularly with regard to resident consultation at planning application stage and safeguarding conservation areas within the 'Protected' category.

Discussion of the PWP proposals coincides with examination in public of the Westminster City Plan. The Association has a special interest in ensuring that plans for the Brompton Road Business Improvement District ('BID') are reflected in the Westminster City Plan. I am pleased to report that numerous representations to the Examiner were made on behalf of the Association and the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum. Time devoted to commenting on these proposals is much appreciated. Further detail is set out on page 37.

When these provisions kick in, Licensing will be the last lever of constraint available to Local Authorities and residents on how Class E planning applications are implemented. Further commentary on the Planning Bill can be found in Savill's article on page 39.

Ward surgeries provide good opportunities for residents to raise issues with councillors and officials, particularly when they are held on-site. This has been difficult during the pandemic but we did manage one in the Autumn which yielded good results in the Rutlands and Montpeliers. Walk-about brings into focus the successes and failings of policy, its implementation or enforcement better than any email, telephone call or photograph. Our

thanks to Councillors from both Councils for giving up time for this.

Some things have to be handled on-line because they happen at strange times of night, like illegal 'house parties in Knightsbridge' or 'doughnut driving' by high performance cars in and around Exhibition Road. After much research and encouragement from residents, RBKC installed a couple of acoustic cameras, one at the north end of Sloane Street and another in Pont Street. We thank councillors for their perseverance in trying to identify, caution and fine those involved in this increasingly frequent abuse of the public realm. However, the problem appears to have shifted to Exhibition Road. Both Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough need to co-ordinate their approach to enforcement with the Metropolitan Police; and more cameras are a necessity.

'Knightsbridge house parties' was a matter swiftly and effectively followed up by the Association's Law and Order committee. Organised through social media, people arrive at a property available under a short let rental agreement and 'party' until the small hours of the morning in contravention of social mixing and distancing regulations. For further details, please refer to the Law and Order report on pages 25–26.

The Royal Parks ('TRP') have been a saviour for residents and visitors throughout eight months of actual or partial lockdown. In March, we were concerned that parks might be closed altogether as visitors were not respecting social distancing rules. The Association, along with other amenity societies, called for parks to remain open, fearful that if walkers were forced onto streets with narrow pavements, the consequences for social distancing would be even worse. You can read more about TRP and the vital role they continue to play in our daily lives on page 23.

Our feature article on pages 47–50. celebrates the 35th anniversary of the opening of the Ismaili Centre in Cromwell Road. Authored by Salimah Lalji, it recounts the construction of this widely acclaimed building and the work of

the Centre. Next year will also be a year of anniversaries: a 150th for the Royal Albert Hall and a 60th for the Knightsbridge Association. Planned celebrations for the Royal Albert Hall's 150th Anniversary include the return of the Proms. As members are aware, the Association will hold a celebratory event at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel on Monday 13 September 2021: more information on these events in our Spring newsletter.

It is a strange world where the Knightsbridge International Shopping Centre is bereft of foreign visitors and our higher education centres of learning struggle to attract foreign students or, if they do, students find themselves stifled by restrictions and quarantine. Despite these dislocations, the 'glorification' of Knightsbridge remains very much in hand and we should not allow it to be overshadowed by darker events that continue to afflict the capital.

Let me conclude by casting back to a letter written by F Scott Fitzgerald to a friend exactly 100 years ago while he quarantined in the South of France during the Spanish influenza outbreak: -

"It was a limpid dreary day, hung as in a basket from a single dull star. I thank you for your letter. Outside, I perceive what may be a collection of fallen leaves tussling against a trash can. It rings like jazz to my ears. The streets are that empty. It seems as though the bulk of the city has retreated to their quarters, rightly so. At this time, it seems poignant to avoid all public spaces. Even the bars, as I told Hemingway, but to that he punched me in the stomach, to which I asked if he had washed his hands. He hadn't. He is much the denier, that one. Why, he considers the virus to be just influenza. I'm curious of his sources."

The information in the following articles and reports was accurate at the time of going to press, but in this constantly changing situation, it is advisable to check websites for the latest updates.

Wishing you and your families a joyful, if reflective, Christmas; and safe passage through the year to come.

Melville Haggard  
Chairman



# PLANNING, CONSERVATION & COMMUNITY PLANNING

Carol Seymour-Newton

## SOUTH KENSINGTON STATION



*View of Bullnose from Old Brompton Road showing scale of development in line with TfL's 2016 Development brief (Craig Hamilton/Chris Draper)*

All the indications were that the planning application for the Around Station Development was to have gone to RBKs Planning Committee in November, but as this magazine goes to press, developers Native Land have indicated to RBKC that they are 'pausing'. A meeting has taken place with planning officers but it is not known whether this 'pause' will result in changes to the present scheme.

Since the application was submitted at the end of June RBKC received a simply massive number of objections to the Rogers Stirk Harbour scheme. By contrast, representations in support were comparatively few with most of these focussed on the developer's hollow promise to deliver step free access. Many of these representations in favour appeared to come from students and staff at Imperial College suggesting a targeted campaign.

The promise of step free access has always been a valuable playing card for developers at South Kensington trying to persuade people that development is necessary if they want easier access to the tube. The same promise was held out in the mid 2000s to garner support for Stanhope's terrible "gasometer" scheme. But, with TfL putting its own Station Capacity Upgrade (SCU) at South Kensington on indefinite hold in July due to budgetary constraints caused by Covid, the idea that Native Land can "deliver"

step free access looks more and more chimeric. And, since July TfL's financial position has deteriorated further.

It has never been necessary to have a massive redevelopment at South Kensington – and in the process cause irreparable harm to the character of the Conservation Area – in order to provide a couple of lifts to the District and Circle Lines. There are no plans as yet to provide lifts to the much deeper



*View of Bullnose from Old Brompton Road showing the scale of Rogers Stirk Harbour's proposed new build in red. (SAVE Britain's Heritage)*

Piccadilly Line so the promise of "step free" access for South Kensington has the hollow ring of developer's hype. Many stations on the Underground network now have lifts (Earls Court has had them for years) without requiring major redevelopment.

Above are images of what a conservation-led development at South Kensington could look like. Altogether far more environmentally friendly and appropriate in the context than the over-scaled slabs proposed.

# MAJOR CONSTRUCTION SITES

Community Liaison Group meetings have continued throughout the year via Zoom. We asked each of the site teams for a progress report for the magazine:

## THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ESTATE

Since the Knightsbridge Estate was acquired by The Olayan Group in 2010, and working closely with Chelsfield as asset and development manager, the Estate has seen several improvements.



When finished, the redevelopment currently underway will deliver seven new flagship shops; 67,000 sq. ft of Grade A office accommodation; 33 luxury apartments for the rental market; a roof-top restaurant and ground floor café. The development will sit behind the retained heritage façades which are being restored, maintaining the unique character of the area, while delivering a brand new building that meets modern occupiers' needs.

A luxury British brand will open its doors in mid-2021 at 1 Sloane Street. 2021 will also see the completion of the six further retail units, the office building and the roof-top restaurant.

There are significant improvements to the public space around the redevelopment; the pavement on

Brompton Road will be widened by up to nine metres to ease pedestrian flow; two new entrances to Knightsbridge tube station and step-free access to the platforms are being created, Hooper's Court itself is being transformed into a safe and pleasant environment, with improved lighting and a pocket square garden. Here, The Estate has commissioned a beautiful, enamelled façade for the new office building that will sit above the original oxblood tiles. The honeysuckle design is inspired by market gardener John Hooper, who laid out Hooper's Court in the 18th Century.

A cupola has been created and installed on top of the building at 1 Sloane Street. This addition was part of the original architect's plan from the early 1900s but was never built.

Over the coming months, the covered walkway near Brompton Road will be taken down and the paving stones replaced.

All of this could not be possible without the hard work of the main contractor, Skanska, and their rapid response to managing the Covid situation. By reconfiguring the site and revising working practices to ensure compliance with the government's strict social distancing rules, the work force returned to work as soon as Government guidelines allowed. Their innovative approach to security and welfare ensured workers were taken off furlough as quickly as possible and without redundancies.

For further information, contact 0808 287 9554 or [construction@cascadecommunications.co.uk](mailto:construction@cascadecommunications.co.uk).

TfL have confirmed to the KA that the new Brompton Road entrance

to Knightsbridge tube station will open in Autumn 2021 and they are still on target to deliver step-free access at the entrance in Hooper's Court in 2022 – 'quarter 4 2021/22'.

## 55-91 KNIGHTSBRIDGE



The project has been running since 2018 when Sir Robert McAlpine took over the development. Since then significant changes have swept the site; from basement excavations in 2018, concrete and steel frame construction in 2019, and now internal fit-out works to the offices and residential apartments.

2020 has seen changes that have affected both the outward and inward appearance of 55-91 Knightsbridge.

### EXTERNAL CHANGES

Following the cleaning and restoration of the Knightsbridge façade, and the installation of a new slate roof, the Knightsbridge façade has begun to be revealed as scaffolding along the north elevation is dismantled.

### INTERNAL CHANGES – Offices

The office spaces on levels 1 and 2 have transformed in recent months, with raised access flooring, ceilings and decoration works adding a sense of completeness



to the space. This has been complemented with new south window installation and north facing window refurbishment.

### INTERNAL CHANGES – Residential Apartments

Apartments on levels 1-5 have made huge progress over the last eight months, with the underfloor heating, plumbing and electrical works being installed. Specialist acoustic partitioning has shaped the flow of the apartments bringing firm layouts to the spaces.

All these works have been taking place throughout this most challenging of years, showing the strong capabilities of all the team working on the development. This has been coupled with a recent Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS) bronze award for Sir Robert McAlpine with an outstanding score of 47/50.

### THE BERKELEY

In spite of the impact of Covid-19 the project has made a good deal of progress. Through the close working of the project teams and the contractors it has been possible to comply with the government guidelines and enable the works to progress.

The basement box concrete structure is now complete to ground floor level. A striking feature of the construction works is the concrete curved walls of the feature staircase, which were challenging to build due to their bespoke nature.



Work in progress

The Principal Contractor has now been replaced to re-commence the construction of the building from ground floor to roof level 10. The specialist steelwork contractor is on site and a milestone has been achieved with the commencement of the erection of the steel frame structure. The external façade system which will be a glass panel is currently undergoing testing and manufacture, in preparation for commencement of installation early next year. Within the basement a fit-out package is in progress for mechanical and electrical works and final furnishings for the future plant rooms, gym and spa spaces.

Elsewhere on the site the Knightsbridge elevation is undergoing a major transformation with the replacement of the façade along Knightsbridge. The new façade will consist of Bath stone in line with the planning conditions. Internally a new modern fit-out of the rooms is taking place. The existing swimming pool on the roof has been decommissioned and will move to the new building early next year,

The project team has been working hard in conjunction with the local council and authorities to ensure all the works are constructed with the least impact to the live hotel, surrounding businesses and local residents,

### THE PENINSULA HOTEL

The Peninsula London at Hyde Park Corner has almost completed its third year of construction and has continued to make visibly good progress.

The external cladding is complete and watertight to Level 5. Works are progressing from the Level 6 to Level 9 façade enclosure and roofing, with these upper levels due to be enclosed and weathertight within the coming months.



An ariel view of The Peninsula Hotel

Internally, excavation works are now all complete. While hotel guest rooms fit-out is ongoing, the rooftop restaurant fit-out has commenced and the residential apartments are due for fit-out in Spring 2021.

With the constraints on construction during the lockdown period, the opening of the hotel will likely be in 2022 when the Hotel will provide 190 rooms as well as a spa, retail outlets, bars, restaurants and a ballroom. The hotel will showcase the best of British culture, art and cuisine, while honouring the group's Asian heritage.

### OTHER PLANS

#### 127-139 KNIGHTSBRIDGE and 2-12 BROMPTON ROAD

Planning applications were received for a 714 seat restaurant at 127–139 Knightsbridge (including 2–12 Brompton Road) (Scotch Corner) on



Large restaurants proposed in Knightsbridge Green and Scotch Corner – former site of Burberry's flagship store.

19 December 2019 and for a 136 seat restaurant at 20-22 Brompton Road (Knightsbridge Green) on 7 January 2020. They were subsequently withdrawn perhaps because they failed to address the requirements of the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan. However, the applicants applied for Certificates of Lawfulness for their proposed use as restaurants

on 4 September 2020 i.e. days after the Government's new Class E 'planning use' entered into force on 1 September 2020 (which merges retail, office and restaurant planning uses). These applications were acknowledged by Westminster City Council in October 2020. We await further details which may include planning

applications where required (e.g. for changes to external features) and detailed licensing applications. Both are likely to require serious scrutiny given the limited external space and poor access at times when such restaurants are likely to be viable again e.g. if Knightsbridge tube is 'exit only' when the Winter Wonderland is operating.

## 2-8A RUTLAND GATE

Following the purchase earlier in the year of this substantial building on the north west side of Rutland Gate, we had a constructive zoom meeting with the owner's representative and advisors. The building has been empty for several years and has become somewhat dilapidated. The intention is to and restore it to a single residence for the new owner.

In September the team were again in contact with us, having written to Rutland Gate residents giving a brief update on the site and introducing the team in advance of commencing some surveys and investigative works in the building.

Since then, we understand discussions have commenced with WCC planners on how the building can be restored to beneficial use. The owner's representatives have committed to engage with the Knightsbridge Association, the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum, ward councillors and neighbours as soon as they have agreed plans in place. If a planning application is to be progressed, they currently do not expect to be in a position



to make any submission(s) until Spring 2021.

For further information, please visit their project website – [www.2-8RutlandGate.co.uk](http://www.2-8RutlandGate.co.uk) or email [rutlandgate@kandaconsulting.co.uk](mailto:rutlandgate@kandaconsulting.co.uk) or call 0203 900 3676.

### SITE HISTORY

The property is a large white stuccoed house originally built as a terrace of four houses in the mid 19th-century. Nos 4-8a were demolished and redeveloped in the 1930s as a single low-rise property eventually becoming home to the German Consulate, whilst no. 2 remained in private ownership. A competition to redesign the terrace was held in 1982 and won by the architectural firm Yorke Rosenberg Mardall. The present 2-8a Rutland Gate was built between 1985 and 1987. The Survey of London describes the design as "One of YRM's least Modern designs ... the building comprises a rather bland white palazzo."

In 2012, the house was described as having seven storeys and 45 bedrooms, with a total size of 60,000 sq ft. The interior has a swimming pool, underground parking, several lifts, and substantial interior decoration of gold leaf. The windows of the house are said to be bullet and rocket proof.

The house was the London residence of the former Prime Minister of Lebanon and billionaire businessman Rafic Hariri, until his assassination in 2005. Following Hariri's death, the house was given as a gift to the then Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud who had business links with Hariri. In 2012, 2-8a Rutland Gate was reported to be for sale at an asking price of £300

million, which would have made it the most expensive house in Britain if realised.

The house remained unsold and was later valued at £140 million in early 2015. In June 2015, contents from the property were put up for auction in a 1,252 lot sale lasting two days. Items for sale included Murano glass chandeliers, gold plated waste paper bins, and 24 marble bathrooms. By July 2015 it had still not been sold and the Saudi owners were reported to be planning to turn the house into luxury apartments.

In January 2020, it was acquired by the current Chinese owner for around £210m.



## OTHER LOCAL NEWS

### SOUTH KENSINGTON ESTATES

**Brompton Gate,  
197 – 205 Brompton Road**

The Brompton Gate retail development has been completed and it has been let to Lux Holdings as a showroom for their prestigious Smallbone kitchen brand. The unit has undergone an extensive fit-out to an extremely high standard and will be opening by the end of the year.

#### Cromwell Place Galleries

The Cromwell Place art gallery development was delayed due to coronavirus but finally completed in September. The listed buildings have been fully restored, and a modern pavilion providing exhibition space and an underground art storage facility has been constructed in the garden area.

Art galleries from around the world are taking membership of the art gallery hub, and will use the venue for exhibitions. More information can be found on the Cromwell Place website [www.cromwellplace.com](http://www.cromwellplace.com)

Cromwell Place opened in October but had to shut again in November due to lockdown. We anticipate it being open to the public again in December.

### LANCELOT PLACE

**15 Lancelot Place  
and 1 Trevor Walk**

When completed this will be the greenest building in Knightsbridge. Both the Lancelot Place and Trevor Walk façades will be covered with planting from top to toe. Due for completion in 2021, number 15 will be a single family residence whilst 1 Trevor Walk will comprise two flats. Car and cycle parking will also be provided.

#### 3–11 Lancelot Place

These houses were demolished some time ago and have been the subject of several planning applications. The KA understands they have now been sold on with planning permission.



Construction works at 15 Lancelot Place

### PRINCES GARDENS PREPARATORY SCHOOL

The School opened its doors to pupils in September and looks forward to moving to their new home in the Christmas holidays.

Unfortunately, COVID delayed building renovations ready for the start of the school year but work is coming along at pace and the school should have moved in to its new home, 10–13 Princes Gardens, by late December. Temporarily based at 23 Princes Gate until the renovation works are complete, the pupils look very smart in their new uniforms as you see them scoot, cycle and walk to school.

With children in all year groups from Pre-Reception to Year 6 the school is working hard to ensure



Headmistress,  
Alison Melrose

the health and wellbeing of pupils, parents and staff by having staggered arrival times, regular hand washing and sanitising, social distancing and keeping the children in dual

year group bubbles. The children enjoy a broad and engaging curriculum, and whilst they cannot visit the museums at the moment they enjoy trips to Hyde Park and the garden.

The majority of the scaffolding has been taken down to reveal the beautiful front elevation and lovely large windows. Many of the upper floor classrooms are decorated, carpeted and have light fittings installed, ready for the children's and teacher's desks and screens to be moved in. The joinery is complete in the art room and the practical science lab, complete with hexagonal science desks.

We have enjoyed collaborating with our neighbours, the Knightsbridge Association and the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum, to ensure that we share our plans and answer any questions and we will continue to do so once we have moved in. Unfortunately, meetings have been held by video call so far and we look forward to showing the group our new building once visitors are allowed.



The school will have early access to key teaching spaces such as the science labs, library and art to start the huge task of unpacking and storing all the necessary school equipment, from large touch screens and pianos, to test tubes and pencils.

The children and staff at Princes Gardens look forward to the first day of term in their new home, Wednesday 6th January 2021.

## THE EXHIBITION ROAD CULTURAL GROUP (ERCG) AND THE 2021 FESTIVAL

The cultural and educational organisations of 'Albertopolis' are working together on plans for the Great Exhibition Road Festival to return in 3-4 July 2021. Led by Imperial College London, the event will build on the success of the 2019 Festival when more than 60,000 people came to the first Great Exhibition Road Festival in South Kensington to enjoy a free weekend of inspiration, exploration, culture, arts and science.

The Festival is a collaboration between more than 20 institutions including: Imperial College London, Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, Royal Albert Hall, Victoria & Albert Museum, Science Museum, Royal College of Music, Natural History Museum, Kensington + Chelsea Art Week, Royal College of Art, Royal Geographical Society and the Goethe Institute.

In Autumn 2020, the Festival launched its new digital programme, with free livestream events, discussions and a whole selection of activities for all ages which will be released throughout the year, leading up to the Festival weekend. Each month explores a new theme, starting with mental health and wellbeing in October 2020.

Launching on World Mental Health Day on 10 October, the Great Exhibition Road Festival, led by Imperial College London, in collaboration with Kensington + Chelsea Art Week (KCAW) opened a new virtual exhibition, *Fantasies of Exhibition Road*. *Fantasies of Exhibition Road* brought together a diverse collection of artists create digital fantasies of iconic places on Exhibition Road in Albertopolis. Taking views of Exhibition Road and its institutions, artists were invited to reimagine the possibilities of this cultural quarter through digital fantasies created during social distancing. Their fantasies have been inspired by conversations with Imperial's scientists on mental health and wellbeing.

[www.greatexhibitionroadfestival.co.uk/](http://www.greatexhibitionroadfestival.co.uk/)



### DISCOVER SOUTH KENSINGTON

Follow the Discover South Kensington Newsletter, an initiative of the Exhibition Road Cultural Group, for up to date news when we re-open following the second lockdown.

[www.discoversouthken.com](http://www.discoversouthken.com)

## A ROUND-UP FROM SOME OF THE ERCG MEMBERS

### ROYAL ALBERT HALL

The Hall will soon mark its 150th anniversary, with landmark celebrations across 2021 and 2022 planned following the building's first closure since the Blitz.

As well as the events programme, the Hall's teams have been working on completing essential capital works. Many of the Hall's planned projects had to be halted in March, but some have carried on in time for the anniversary.

On the exterior, the scaffolding and cabins seen around the

building since 2017 will be coming down as external repairs and cleaning are completed in December. Improvements to the public space around the Hall will begin in January 2021, including an extension to the pavement and crossing along the North, improving access, pedestrian safety and security.

On the inside, show cancellations during the pandemic have opened an opportunity for repairs, including historic ceiling plaster inspections, works to the glazed dome roof, and recovery of the gallery roof, which will maintain the

*Some of the ornate plasterwork*





Hall for future generations. A new double-height basement in the south-west quadrant has also now been completed, providing the Hall with much-needed additional space as it reopens.

The Hall's plans have had to adapt under significant uncertainty, but 150th celebrations remain at the heart of 2021, with a very exciting programme that marks the Hall's eclectic past and future.

## NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

### URBAN NATURE PROJECT

© The Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London



*In the Wildlife Garden visitors, volunteers and scientists can identify, study and monitor wildlife*

The Natural History Museum is delighted to let you know that following many months of design and consultation, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea have given us the go-ahead to transform the Museum's 5-acre outdoor space into an 'epicentre' of urban nature.

We are creating a leading sustainable design and construction for the gardens that aims to go beyond net zero. This positive outcome means that we can now proceed with finalising these designs and plan to undertake the construction work between September 2021 and summer 2023.

You will be able to get a feel for the proposed designs by viewing a model of the gardens on display in the Darwin Centre Atrium. The model will be in place at least for the next couple of years whilst the

construction is underway. Please come and take a look when we re-open.

Do get in touch if you have any questions [urbannature@nhm.ac.uk](mailto:urbannature@nhm.ac.uk)

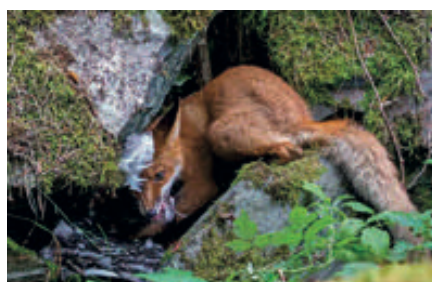
### VISITING THE MUSEUM AND FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS

We regret that the Museum will be closed to the public from Thursday 5 November. We are looking forward to welcoming visitors back in early December as long as the relevant restrictions have been lifted.

We would like to thank everyone for their continued support. To keep connected with the natural world, visit our online shop or make a donation please go to [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk).

In the meantime, here are two forthcoming exhibitions to look forward to. Please visit [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk) and check our social media for the latest information.

### WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR – UNTIL JUNE 2021



*The fox that got the goose by Liina Heikkinen won this year's Young Photographer of the Year award*

This year's exhibition promises to immerse you in the breathtaking diversity of the natural world. The award night on 13 October was broadcast live around the world and the Museum's Patron, HRH The Duchess of Cambridge, announced Sergey Gorshkov as the overall winner for his photograph 'The Embrace'. Visit [www.nhm.ac.uk/wpy](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/wpy) for more information.

### FANTASTIC BEASTS: THE WONDER OF NATURE–

Our blockbuster exhibition – allowing you to discover where the real and wizarding worlds intertwine, is set to open this winter. Keep an eye on our website for news about ticket releases.

### ICE RINK

We are sorry to share that the Natural History Museum Ice Rink will not be opening this season. Our team has been working hard to bring London some much-needed festive fun on the rink in a safe and responsible manner, but in light of ongoing health concerns and uncertainty surrounding Covid-19, we unfortunately won't be able to do so this year.

### BUILDINGS UPDATE

**Palaeontology Building:** Commencing in August and continuing to April 2021 urgent work to the glass façades and concrete frame of the building is underway. A hoarding will be constructed on the pavement in Exhibition Road and a compound for materials storage will be built on Museum Lane to facilitate the process. Upon completion, the building will look much the same as it does now.

**Terracotta:** Urgent repairs to two areas have been addressed during the summer to the front elevation – West to Centre, and Centre to East. The works will be completed within the next few weeks and the scaffold removed. The programme will re-commence next spring.

### SCIENCE MUSEUM

One cheering note amidst all the gloom, was the announcement in October that the Museum had been announced as a winner of the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2020.

The Museum has once again had to close its doors, but hopes to re-open at the beginning of December.

All being well March 2021 will see the opening of a new, free exhibition about carbon capture. The first significant UK exhibition

to be presented on the subject of carbon capture and storage, it will explore the latest techniques being developed for removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to mitigate climate change.



2021 Serpentine Pavilion

Forthcoming exhibitions include, from 31 March, Carbon Capture: The first significant UK exhibition to be presented on the subject of carbon capture and storage,

#### ABOUT THE COVID-19 COLLECTING PROJECT

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic their curators are 'actively and with great sensitivity' researching stories and identifying objects to collect on the nation's behalf. These items will join the Science Museum Group Collection, providing a permanent record for future generations of medical, scientific, industrial, cultural and personal responses to the outbreak and chronicling its impact on society.

#### V&A MUSEUM

In August the Museum began reopening in phases, with two floors initially, followed later in the month by further sections and galleries.



Inside the V&A's Raphael Court gallery

Sadly, as with the other museums once again the doors had to close to visitors on 5 November, but hopefully better news will enable the lockdown to be lifted by early December.

Encouraging news: the V&A's Raphael Court – home to the Raphael Cartoons – should be able to open in December following a nine-month refurbishment to mark the 500th anniversary of Raphael's death.

The refurbished gallery's new interpretive approach will provide the public with a deeper level of access to the Raphael Cartoons, enhancing our understanding of these monumental works of art.

One of the V&A's largest and most dramatic galleries, The Raphael Court is almost identical in proportions to the Sistine Chapel and was last refurbished from 1992 to 1996. Combined with enhanced interpretation, the new

scheme – with its darker colour palette, state-of-the-art lighting, refreshed furniture, new graphics and on-site digital experience – will heighten visitors' viewing experience and their enjoyment of these works of art.

Future exhibitions planned include:

Opening 27 March 2021:

Alice, Curiouser and Curiouser, charting the evolution of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland from manuscript to a global phenomenon, beloved by all ages.

#### SERPENTINE GALLERY

The major exhibition planned for this winter for New York-based painter Jennifer Packer – one of the most significant artists of her generation – should be able to go ahead when the second lockdown comes to an end – hopefully in early December.

Next year's programme includes a career-spanning retrospective for legendary British-Ghanaian photographer James Barnor; exhibitions and activations around the Galleries' ongoing Back to Earth project, which asks artists to respond to climate emergency; and much more. The Serpentine is always FREE to all; to book tickets or to find out more about the Galleries' online offer visit [serpentinegalleries.org](https://serpentinegalleries.org)

Installation of the 2020 Summer Pavilion, see above, designed by Johannesburg-based practice, Counterspace, was postponed until 2021.



# THE ROYAL PARKS

## London's lifeline during the pandemic and into the future

Andrew Scattergood, CEO, The Royal Parks Charity



©The Royal Parks

The Royal Parks are many things to many people and play a fundamental role in ensuring London remains one of the most visited and loved cities in the world. And throughout the past seven months, many people have discovered a new understanding and appreciation of the parks as they have become a lifeline, providing vital recreation, relaxation and respite from the uncertainty of the new world in which we find ourselves.

We know that being in the fresh air and close to nature is crucial for mental and physical wellbeing. This was especially important during lockdown restrictions, when visitors were able to find true peace and solace in nature, as well as the opportunity for exercise and quiet reflection. This continues to be incredibly important, as people face the ongoing uncertainty of Covid and the financial and health pressures it brings.

The value of green space in boosting city dwellers' physical and mental wellbeing cannot be underestimated. We have been overwhelmed by messages of gratitude from visitors thanking us for keeping the parks open. So many people have shared their photographs and special memories of their daily visits and have been emailing and phoning us to let us know when they've seen or heard things they were worried about such as litter, or behaviour towards wildlife. During lockdown, when people could only go out for exercise, we estimate that there



Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens

was a 16% increase in visitors across all our parks.

Our experience of both lockdown and the easing of lockdown has been unique. Early on, we were very worried about having to close completely, but thanks to the dedication of our staff and contractors, we were able to keep the parks open and safe for everyone to enjoy throughout the restrictions.

We had to respond at pace at the start of the crisis to close facilities, including toilets, cafés, car parks and playgrounds, to make sure the parks were safe and could stay open.

We were unable to deliver our learning programmes in Hyde Park for schools, families,

adults and community groups. Instead, we had to adapt quickly and used the opportunity to create a multitude of online learning resources that included a guide on how to identify birds and a video on how to transform a balcony into an allotment.

We also found ways to bring the parks into people's homes through our social media platforms, which saw an exponential growth of 14,000 followers from March-



Rolling the grass in Hyde Park



Picnic in Hyde Park

August. Original content included a free 360-degree virtual tour of the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park—the site of The Great Exhibition of 1851 – which can be viewed on our website.

During the summer, we saw visitor numbers steadily increase, in part due to the gradual relaxation of the rules around lockdown and in part due to the good weather. However, the significant increase in visitor numbers, at a time when the majority of the facilities that cater for or support our visitors were still closed or were operating in a reduced capacity, led to challenges, particularly around litter, and this was tough on our park management team and contractors. We need to continue to be innovative and flexible. Finding ways to make things work and being able to welcome visitors to the parks in a way that is safe for everyone, and does not have a negative impact on the environment, will be critical over the coming months.

Like many organisations, the pandemic has had a significant impact on our operations and finances since March and continues to do so. Since becoming a charity in 2017, our commercial activities have been successful. However, the pandemic led to every one of our major events being cancelled this year, catering outlets and

other concessions being closed or restricted, and reduced demand for many of the revenue-generating activities in the park. This has had an impact on our finances.

We have responded to this by reducing our budgets, primarily putting capital and maintenance projects on hold, pending further clarity over our future finances. This is only a short-term solution, as the postponed work still needs to be completed at some stage.

We are pleased to be one of the hundreds of heritage organisations across England recently granted Government funds to help them

through the pandemic. We have been awarded £975k for specific projects, to be spent by 31 March 2021. The funding will be used to help us invest further in sustainable waste management, to Covid-proof our toilet facilities across the parks to ensure they are fit for purpose, and to explore new income-generating opportunities, including fundraising and commercial streams.

Whilst the long-term impact of Covid-19 on our charity and income is not yet clear, it is likely to be significant. But we are confident that, with a clear strategy and a strong team of staff, contractors, volunteers and partners, we will be able to navigate through the challenges presented by the pandemic. Throughout this crisis the parks have been here for everyone, and we are proud that they will continue to be here for everyone now and in the future. Never have they been more important to London.

*Andrew Scattergood is the Chief Executive of The Royal Parks Charity. His organisation was set up to manage and fundraise for London's Royal Parks.*

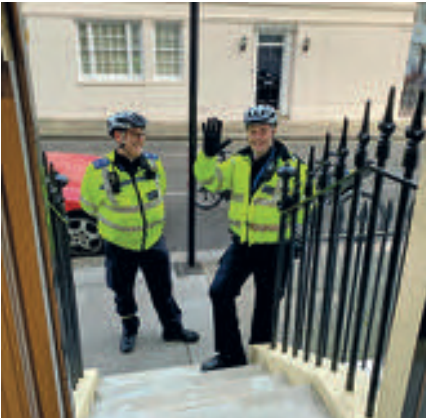


Hyde Park at night



# LAW AND ORDER

Madeline Elsdon



This year we have continued to engage regularly, albeit differently, with our police teams and councils, in virtual meeting rooms or by having socially distanced doorstep and street meetups.

## DEMONSTRATIONS



It has been a difficult, dangerous and unpleasant time for our safer neighbourhood police teams who were abstracted non-stop this summer for events such as Notting Hill Carnival, Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter demonstrations which took our police teams away from Knightsbridge.

## KNIGHTSBRIDGE GRAND PRIX

After at least 10 years of meetings and dozens of complaints from residents about the noise and danger from supercars, RBKC councillors listened to us and funded the positioning of mobile acoustic cameras in various Knightsbridge locations to detect

noisy and antisocial drivers who are using our streets as "racetracks". Drivers caught streaking noisily along the streets, sometimes into the early hours, could face large fines, while the Council say it may also apply for court orders to seize the vehicles of persistent offenders. This is front line technology for the UK and RBKC is the first Council to trial these cameras.

In addition, the Brompton police team mounted extra patrols and an anti-supercar sting "OPERATION DAYTONA" which operated in the Knightsbridge area over the whole summer. The Section 35 Anti-Social Behaviour Notice, Crime and Policing Act 2014, PSPO breaches and other traffic offences were also successfully enforced.

## NEW CRIME IN KNIGHTSBRIDGE



Residents have been reporting instances of theft of catalytic converters from their cars parked at

night. The scrap value of precious metals in these catalytic converters is high and has recently led to this new crime. Hybrids, SUV's and 4 x 4 vehicles with high ground clearance are most vulnerable, It can take less than 30 seconds to steal them. Police have been advising owners to park in a well-lit area or garage overnight.

## SHISHA BARS



In Knightsbridge Green an illegal indoor shisha lounge was hiding away for some time, even during lockdown. WCC-led prohibition notices were served focused on the Covid-19 restrictions. Unfortunately, as one hookah bar is closed down another one is immediately opened nearby. The council, together with Knightsbridge and Belgravia Safer Neighbourhood Team, will continue to monitor their activities.



Police checking Ferraris

## BUSKING

In the past the Association often received complaints about buskers, who do not need a licence to perform in the street in Knightsbridge. Since the Busking and Street Entertainment Policy RBKC introduced in response to the detrimental impact in the area, especially around Harrods and the museums, the buskers appear to have vanished.

## TAKE CARE

The Covid-19 lockdown helped to reduce criminality but since the ease of lockdown and the reopening of shops crime is increasing. We are advised to remain vigilant and report any suspicious behaviour. You can call our Dedicated Ward Officers directly or leave a message.

The Law and Order Committee meet three times a year where our

three police teams, (Knightsbridge and Belgravia, Brompton and Hans Town and the Royal Parks) exchange information with councillors and officers from both councils, committee members, faith group representatives, local business leaders and invited residents. In normal times we also welcome a guest speaker. If you would like to join the committee please contact the Association at [info@knightsbridgeassociation.com](mailto:info@knightsbridgeassociation.com)

## LOCAL SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAMS

### WESTMINSTER RESIDENTS KNIGHTSBRIDGE and BELGRAVIA WARD

Email: [knightsbridge.belgravia.SNT@met.police.uk](mailto:knightsbridge.belgravia.SNT@met.police.uk)  
Tel: 020 7321 9292  
Mobile: 07769 164 785  
(not 24 hrs)

Contacts:  
PC Dave Alford  
PC Alex Kaye  
PCSO Zack Slaney



### RBKC RESIDENTS BROMPTON and HANS TOWN CLUSTER

Email: [Brompton.SNT@met.police.uk](mailto:Brompton.SNT@met.police.uk)  
Tel: 020 7161 8982  
Mobile: 07768 178 122

Contacts:  
PC Rocky Bance  
PCSO Amankou 'Amon'



*Brompton and Hans  
Town Team with Cllr.  
Sof McVeigh*

#### Other useful links to note

**Twitter** @MPSKnightsbridge

**Crime Prevention** [www.met.police.uk/crime prevention](http://www.met.police.uk/crime%20prevention)

**Crime Statistics** [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)

**Action Fraud** [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)

**Call 101 if you require non-emergency police assistance**

**Contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 if you wish to supply anonymous information.**

**IN AN EMERGENCY ALWAYS CALL 999**



# TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Simon Birkett and Chris Barrass

The Transport and Environment Committee has made real progress in 2020 in several important areas despite the extraordinary ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

## PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

We are always pleased to see investment in our 'public realm' after appropriate consultation. This is typically done to improve pedestrian movement and traffic flows or respond to serious traffic collisions.

After thorough consultation, Westminster is due to start work on improving the public space between the Royal Albert Hall and the Albert Memorial in February 2021. This work is an important part of the larger Albertopolis Scheme planned around the Royal Albert Hall. It should improve the pavement space without reducing traffic flows, improve the pedestrian crossing, create a step-free link to the Albert Memorial and add hazardous vehicle mitigation measures. We hope the work will be completed by the 150th anniversary of the Royal Albert Hall on 29 March 2021.

At the eastern end of Knightsbridge, RBKC has consulted on the proposed permanent closure of Basil Street where it joins Sloane Street. This closure would address the long-term problem of traffic from Basil Street blocking a busy junction in Sloane Street close to Scotch Corner. Analysis by RBKC points to significant reductions in journey times north and south bound in Sloane Street. We have asked RBKC to ensure that any new pavement space is used to improve pedestrian flows in and out of the new entrance to the Knightsbridge tube station and is not commercialised.

After several serious injuries from traffic collisions, Westminster

moved and upgraded the pedestrian crossing in Knightsbridge between Trevor Place and Trevor Street to reduce the complexity of the entrance/exit to Trevor Place. This was followed later in 2020 by TfL installing



countdown timers on each of two pedestrian crossings in Brompton Road near Brompton Square. The latter change followed a death and a life changing injury to pedestrians in separate incidents.

## TRAFFIC MEASURES

The past year has seen progress on a number of long-term traffic projects. Most satisfying among these is Westminster's implementation of 20mph speed limits on all its local roads. These include Kensington Gardens and Prince Consort Road but not Brompton Road which is managed by TfL. This is the biggest, cheapest, best way for Westminster to reduce traffic collisions, encourage walking and cycling, reduce noise and improve air quality. Experience elsewhere shows that enforcement will be necessary to maximise the benefits. The KA and KNF have long campaigned for this popular measure.

Another important development has been the finalisation of the Royal Parks' Movement Strategy.



The final version was much improved after we criticised earlier drafts. For example, it now clearly supports considerate cycling in the Parks and commits to working with the Parks Police on enforcement. The Royal Parks is launching a trial permanent closure of North Carriage Drive and the closure of South Carriage Drive on Saturdays as well as Sundays. The KA successfully opposed the closure of West Carriage Drive (but this remains a threat).

We understand that the full closure of South Carriage Drive occurred this Autumn, after we expected it to be re-opened at least five days a week, because the Royal Parks felt it necessary to stop vehicles entering or exiting the Queen Mother's Gate across cyclists using the new space created on the west side of the northbound carriageway of Park Lane. This problem needs to be resolved.

In other developments, RBKC is pleased with the roll-out of acoustic cameras in Knightsbridge which record cars when a 74 decibel threshold is exceeded. The cameras were activated more than 130 times in the first 11 days of operation. RBKC sent warning letters threatening fines for subsequent offences and say they will apply to the court to seize the vehicles of persistent offenders. All this 'sounds' good but we worry that it has already displaced activity to Exhibition Road and Prince Consort Road. To be more effective, both Councils need to co-operate and there need to be more cameras.

Separately, we await with some trepidation the introduction of e-scooters to our streets after stories of shocking accidents and dangerous behaviour on pavements or in shopping areas in other cities or towns. We are also worried about the possible random dumping of hired e-bikes and e-scooters on the pavement.

## CADENT GASWORKS

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Cadent, which is the successor to British Gas and owns and operates the main gas distribution network in our area, is in the process of replacing its old steel pipes with three foot (one metre) diameter new plastic pipes which will allow them to increase gas pressures and therefore capacity and blend natural gas with hydrogen to reduce its carbon footprint. After very slow progress at the complex road junction in front of the Brompton Oratory in 2019, Cadent sped up Brompton Road to Scotch Corner by mid-November 2020. The traffic restrictions at Scotch Corner caused chaos in September, particularly because they coincided with the closure of South Carriage Drive (see under Traffic Measures above), but these were fixed at the start of October when a new custom-made 'chip' and cameras were installed at Cadent's expense to better manage the traffic. This was a major success. The final stage of works is due to start again in mid-January, immediately east of Scotch Corner to west of the Hyde Park Underpass. Cadent is consulting us on the arrangements and expects to limit disruption to one lane in Knightsbridge. We

have asked them to keep residents fully informed and liaise with TfL to ensure that large yellow signs warn traffic to avoid this area in 2021. Cadent has managed these complex works professionally, apart from the one traffic snarl up in September 2020, but the outcome will, at best, be a stop gap before the full electrification of buildings in London to meet commitments by local councils and the Government to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040 and 2050 respectively. A history of gas use in central London follows on pages 42-44.

## UTILITIES – STREET LIGHTING AND DRAINS

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We all tend to take utilities for granted in public spaces: most particularly storm water drains; and streetlights. Both are important and managed by Westminster City Council.

Effective storm water drains will become increasingly important as experts predict warmer, wetter winters and bigger storms in winter and summer due to climate change. This year, Westminster City Council and its contractors FM Conway, have made real progress addressing the causes of street flooding after heavy rain e.g. blocked drains in Ennismore Street and Princes Gardens. A number of other drains remain blocked, as a result of builders dumping concrete or other material down them or other illegal activity during renovations, but these are not currently associated with flooding.

Westminster and FM Conway have also been upgrading our streetlights to save energy and/or address faults such as 'day burners' which remain on all day. August and September saw some systemic problems with many lights out simultaneously in parts of the Ennismores, Montpeliers and Trevors. Our urgent request for help was answered by Westminster's contractors, FM Conway, who worked hard for several weeks to upgrade these

lights. Please report any problems immediately on the FixMyStreet.com website or app. Aesthetically, we are concerned that some new street lights seem to be of different heights in the same street.

## RUBBISH, RECYCLING AND DRAINS

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KA newsletters have reported on the excellent work done by Westminster and their waste contractors, Veolia, to keep our streets much cleaner in 2021. We have kept pushing for enforcement against persistent offenders who dump rubbish or recycling out of hours with some success. We



can all play our part by reporting every breach on the FixMyStreet.com website or app. It's easy to add photos and the street number and name of the problem location to help the street cleaners and Council Inspectors take action. The more reports you submit, the easier it becomes to identify patterns and get action. Separately, Westminster would like to consolidate waste collection in the city which we have suggested would be best done by publishing a Westminster Code of Waste Collection with an accreditation scheme.

## COVID-19 AND THE TFL 'BAILOUT'

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Spring lockdown and a 65% drop in tube usage this year, combined with a 35% reduction in bus usage, has caused a collapse in TfL income. TfL's problems have been exacerbated by: the Mayor's



election commitment in 2016 not to increase fares; the Government removing £700 million of grants; and the Government requiring the Mayor to run a full service on around 20% demand. Without fares income, TfL needs government funding to keep our transport services running. A multi-year bailout of some £5 billion was being discussed at the time of writing. Some of the measures being proposed have included: extending the Congestion Charge to the North and South Circular; the scrapping of free travel on buses and the tube for under 18s and over 60s; increasing fares by more than inflation; and/or raising council tax to pay for public transport. We expect the arguments and accusations to become more “political” as we head to the

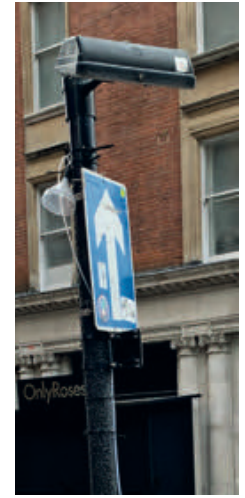
Mayoral election on 6 May 2021. There are no easy solutions.

## CLEANER AIR 2021!

We are looking forward to a healthier Knightsbridge next year with the extension of the Ultra Low Emission Zone to the North and South Circular on 25 October 2021. This measure was announced in June 2018 and targets the oldest, most polluting diesel and petrol vehicles i.e. roughly pre-2014 and pre-2005 vehicles respectively. It is a clean air not congestion measure. The Mayor estimates that its implementation initially in Central London led to a 44% reduction in roadside concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), a toxic gas, there since February 2017. Many people have already upgraded their vehicles, with

electric cars popular, or made other plans. Please check TfL's website for details [www.tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/ultra-low-emission-zone](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/ultra-low-emission-zone) and ask Westminster City Council for an electric charging point if you would like them to install one near your home.

For more details, visit [www.westminster.gov.uk/request-vehicle-charging-point](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/request-vehicle-charging-point) e.g. to avoid loose wires across pavements. We hope to enjoy similar benefits to Central London.



*Nitrogen dioxide air pollution monitor in Knightsbridge*

# LICENSING

Paul Meitner

## OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

This really has been a year of contrasts – ‘business as usual’ until the end of March, followed by near-inactivity once lockdown measures required the complete closure of pubs, restaurants and other licensed premises. From mid-July onwards there was a gradual return to ‘normal’, boosted by the ‘Eat out to Help out’ initiative, which gave customers a 50% discount on the

cost of food eaten on the premises, up to a maximum of £10 per head, on Mondays to Wednesdays in August. Following a steady increase in Covid-19 infections in the Autumn, the placing of London into ‘Tier 2’ in October and finally ‘lockdown 2.0’ at the beginning of November there has been another slowdown in Licensing activity, which looks like it will last until Spring 2021. The long-term effect on our high streets is likely to be

profound – many food and drink chains have already reduced the number of their outlets, no doubt more will follow.

Most of the licensing applications in the first two quarters were renewals, where, mindful of the challenging business environment, we only lodged objections in exceptional circumstances. Once lockdown began to be lifted there was a marked shift in business activity from inside buildings to outside them, resulting in numerous applications for tables and chairs, often late into the evening.

## PAVEMENT TABLES AND CHAIRS

Keeping on top of applications to place Tables & Chairs (“T&Cs”) on the pavement outside cafés and restaurants has become a challenge as a result of a reduction in the minimum notice period for T&Cs applications to seven days. The whole issue has become increasingly contentious. Firstly, the ‘terminal hour’ has steadily



*Safe spacing during lockdown*



Tables and chairs cluttering the pavement

moved later into the evening, such that many premises, in particular those around Harrods, now request 10 p.m. as a standard. This can have serious consequences for people living above and nearby, owing to loud conversation and laughter until at least 10 p.m., followed by the sound of T&Cs being removed and taken indoors. Visitors to our part of London sometimes forget that there are permanent residents, many of whom need to rise early and go to work – Knightsbridge isn't just a party town. Finally, tables and chairs on busy pavements, next to important thoroughfares such as the Brompton Road, can create obstacles for pedestrians, forcing them into the road and placing themselves at risk.

Consequently we push back strongly on applications that involved placing T&Cs on the pavement late into the evening, either in or near residential areas. We will also support individual residents and neighbouring residents' associations when they lodge objections.

## GOVERNMENT MEASURES

The Government has been keen to help the hospitality sector through the pandemic. However, some of the measures proposed could have serious adverse effects on our quality of life. In our experience late night drinking 'off premises' can lead to an increase in violence, noise and disorder. As mentioned in the Chairman's Statement, we supported a successful amendment to the bill, proposed by the KNF and the Kensington Society and

submitted by Felicity Buchan, MP for Kensington, to bring back the terminal hour for these sales from 3 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Westminster City Council published a strategy document

that included proposals to change public space, road and pavement layouts to facilitate social distancing, while allowing people to move more freely and support the reopening of bars and restaurants. This included temporary adaptations to the Planning and Licensing systems including permissions to move services outdoors, plus a fast track process to assess applications for tables and chairs. For now at least the streets in our area are not included.

That having been said it's not all doom and gloom – there have been successes to report in relation to individual applications.

## KUWAIT FOOD RESTAURANT 86 Brompton Road



This involved the placing of six tables and twelve chairs on the pavement, between 7.00 a.m. and 11.00 p.m. daily. We objected to the terminal hour and the number of items involved, in a busy street which narrows just before the junction with Lancelot Place. The application was refused and a revised version, for two tables and four chairs, approved, more in keeping with nearby premises.

## KULU KULU SUSHI 39 Thurloe Place

The management had placed T&Cs on the pavement but on checking the RBKC Licensing Register we found that they did not have a licence. We reported them to the Enforcement Team, who obliged the operator to remove the Ts& Cs. When an application was submitted later we objected. RBKC agreed with our suggestion that the terminal hour should be brought back from 11 p.m. to 10 p.m.

## ZIA TERESA 5-6 Hans Road

The company owning this long-established Italian restaurant near Harrods changed last year and the new owners were obliged to submit a new licence application. We were concerned by the proposed closing time of midnight, Monday to Saturday and lodged an objection. The owners agreed to several changes to their operations to address our concerns, including late night noise. See page 42 for a history of the local hospitality and changes in the offing.

## OSTERIA ROMANA 3 Park Close

This involved the placing of three tables and six chairs in a narrow alleyway leading from Hyde Park down to Knightsbridge. Our view, shared by many residents and





businesses, was that this would create a serious bottleneck in a busy pedestrian thoroughfare. Accordingly we lodged an objection. The application was due to be heard on 4 August but at the time of writing the outcome is not known.

## DININGS

### Lennox Gardens Mews

An application outside our area, this time for off-site alcohol sales. Together with other residents' associations we lodged an objection. The application was adjourned following objections.

### PRET A MANGER 106 Brompton Road

This involved the placing of three tables and six chairs on the pavement, in a section of the Brompton Road where they are prevalent. Although opposed to the extension of T&Cs into the public realm we did not object, as the application was well thought out and included a detailed management plan.



*Pret a Manger's application was well thought out*

## EFFECT OF PLANNING WHITE PAPER

As referred to in the Chairman's report and the Planning section the Planning White Paper ('PWP') has introduced radical change to the planning landscape, one of which is highly relevant to licensing. The 1987 Use Classes Order has been amended by the addition of a new 'Class E', with effect from 1 September 2020. This will have a major impact on High Streets

– including Brompton Road and other parts of Knightsbridge – by allowing interchangeability between retail, restaurant, office and professional services uses, with no need for new planning consents. As a result local authorities, residents and their associations will lose an important check on the setting up of new business, leaving the licensing process as the only mechanism for representations (including objections) to be made.

# KNIGHTSBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Simon Birkett

We have passed a number of important milestones this year. These have included: the completion of the refurbishment of the 'hole in the wall' and its lighting on 22 May after our first application to Westminster City Council for the spending of the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL); Westminster City Council approving our re-designation as the neighbourhood forum for the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area for a further five years on 2 June 2020; our first virtual AGM in June; spending nearly five days giving evidence to the Planning Inspectors during the hearings for the Examination in Public of the draft new Westminster City Plan (which could affect

our neighbourhood plan); and responding to the Government's consultation on its Planning White Paper (which could lead to many changes in the planning system over the next few years). We have also tried to help other Forums in the City of Westminster progress their neighbourhood plans towards Examination and Referendum. Key priorities looking ahead include: keeping an eye on the expiry of the Certificate of Immunity from listing of the Hyde Park Barracks on 19 January 2021; commenting selectively on significant planning applications; applying for further use of the NCIL monies; and

considering updating or amending our neighbourhood plan when the new planning regime becomes clearer. Please contact the Forum or the KA if you have ideas for local infrastructure improvements that would be similar to the successful renovation of the 'hole in the wall'.



*Hyde Park Barracks*

# MEMBERS' SECTION

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS AND NEW YEAR RECEPTIONS

### 2019



*Nickie Aiken takes questions from the floor*

The Association was again delighted to be able to hold our AGM and New Year Reception in the beautiful ballroom of the Mandarin Oriental. Our thanks go to Amanda Hyndman, General Manager of the hotel, for her generosity in making it available to us once again.

Amongst our many guests we welcomed our two newly elected local MPs., Nickie Aiken, for Cities of London and Westminster, formerly Leader of Westminster City Council, (WCC) and Felicity Buchan for Kensington. Both MPs engaged

with the audience and answered a number of pertinent questions.

Also present were Greater London Assembly Member, Tony Devenish and Rachael Robathan, local Belgravia and Knightsbridge ward councillor, who a short while later was elected Leader of WCC to succeed Nickie Aiken. The Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Ruth Bush attended as did the Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea, Cllr Will Pascall, accompanied by Cllr Walaa Idris, Deputy Mayor and Brompton and Hans Town ward councillor.

Our chosen charity this year to benefit from the raffle – once again, the prizes consisted of three magnums of champagne generously donated by our Vice President, Lady Grade – was the Royal Trinity Hospice. Anthony Davison, Director of Fundraising was amongst the guests. We are pleased to announce that the takings, including a small top-up from the Association came to £600 which was received with much appreciation by the Royal Trinity Hospice.

### 2020

Earlier in the year in anticipation that by next January there was a chance of things getting back to normal, we made a booking for the Mandarin Oriental ballroom in January 2021. However, as Covid-19 took an increasing hold, it became obvious that this was never going to happen and we would have to turn our minds to organising a virtual meeting. A Zoom meeting has been set up, and forms posted to members, so that those unable to attend, or who do not have access to the internet, can participate. As usual, members have been invited

to send in questions in advance. There should be a chat option available on the night. We hope to see as many of you as possible, and we hope to welcome our two MPs, Leaders, local ward councillors and council officers from both Councils.

### 2021

#### **The Knightsbridge Association's 60th Anniversary**

The KA was founded in 1961 following a campaign by a group of residents, led by Leonard Bonham, Robin Gillett, subsequently Lord

Mayor of London and His Honour, Judge Sir David Croom-Johnson, to resist plans by Harrods to establish a large auction house at the corner of Cheval Place and Montpelier Walk. This would have involved constant heavy lorry movements shattering the relative calm of the quiet hinterland of Knightsbridge. Following a public enquiry, Westminster City Council refused permission. Emboldened by this success the campaigners decided to set up the Association to resist future such proposals. Accordingly, the anniversary celebration is booked in at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel for Monday 13 September 2021..



## RECEPTION BEFORE THE 2019 AGM



*Siobhan Barney and Ashley Rolfe*



*Cllr Will Pascall, Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea, Cllr Ruth Bush, Lord Mayor of Westminster and Frances Blois*



*Michael Bach and Hugh Seaborn*



*Rachael Stearns and Linda Waterhouse*



*Luke Blair and Marcell Shirazi*



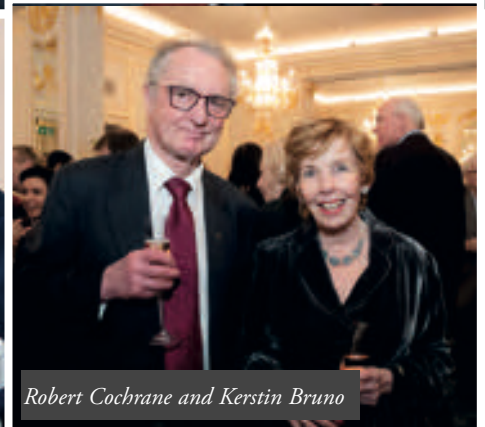
*Robert Moreland and Anne Wright*



*Martin Illingworth and Rachel Galvin*



*Emma Dent Coad, Melville Haggard and Cllr Sina Lari*



*Robert Cochrane and Kerstin Bruno*



*David and Mary Frances Lindstrom*



*Hazel Sparey and Simon Birkett*



*Richard and Julie Bond*



## RECEPTION BEFORE THE 2019 AGM



*Cllr Walaa Idris, Deputy Mayor,  
Kensington and Chelsea  
and Anthony Davison, The Royal Trinity Hospice*



*GLA member Tony Devenish, John Zamit  
and Cllr Rachael Robathan*



*Diddi Malek and Yoshi Nishio*



*Clare Scherrer, Gary Lapidus  
and Nassim Malik-Noor*



*Nikki Hunter and Anthony Cutler*



*and Arthur Brulinski, Chris  
Barrass and Stephen Medway*



*Panda and Alexandra Morgan Thomas*



*Christine Campbell  
and Emily Candler*



*Dr Ursula Manduca  
and Aida Berkhamovich*



*PC Dave Alford, PC Rocky Bance  
and PCSO Amonkou 'Amon'*



*Andrew Williams, Jason Taylor  
and Matteo Margaroli*



*Olivia Campbell, Francesco Brenta  
and James Anicich*



# THE ASSOCIATION

## FINANCES

The finances have improved in the financial year ending 31 March 2020, with a surplus in the Annual Accounts of nearly £2,885, compared to a deficit of £8,614 the previous year. The surplus arose from a reduction of over £5,000 in the cost of printing and mailing the Annual Report with UKMail, and increased subscriptions which included the group subscription from 199 Knightsbridge (see Membership). Consultancy fees were also lower by over £4,000. There were slight increases in Office Costs and AGM costs.

Despite the effects of the Covid-19 situation, our current finances for 2020 look healthy, and we hope that the income from advertisements will cover the costs of the 2020 Annual Report. Bank interest income is likely to be minimal over the current financial year.

We are very grateful to Elmar Toime for arranging the mailing and printing with UKMail. We would also like to thank Tom Slator of Maccallum Slator very much for again checking the Annual Accounts.

## MEMBERSHIP

Our membership has benefitted from a group KA subscription from 199 Knightsbridge which has brought in one hundred new members and additional income. These group members receive all the information provided by the KA, but do not have individual voting rights at the AGM. We hope to initiate a similar approach for group membership with other local properties.

In line with KA's Privacy Policy dated April 2020 (available on the KA website), the Membership Database only contains details of current members. However some people still making subscription payments have resigned or moved away without giving us their new

address. They therefore receive no KA correspondence, and we are unable to contact them to remind them to cancel their standing orders. We categorise these people separately as "contributing ex-members" on the database.

The KA is now registered on the Data Protection Register at the Information Commissioners Office (ICO).

We have about 80 members for whom we do not hold an e-mail address and who receive our information only by post. It would be very helpful if these members could provide an e-mail if they have one, so that we can keep them informed in a timely manner, particularly on consultation matters which may have imminent deadlines.

## EVENTS

The Association undertakes visits that are educational and recreational to prominent sites both in London or within the scope of a day trip from London. We aim to organise these two to three times a year and welcome suggestions for visits from members.

We had to cancel all events in 2020 and the programme will remain in abeyance until the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions are lifted. In anticipation of a return to something resembling normality, the Association has booked the Ballroom at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel for an evening reception to mark its 60th anniversary on Monday 13 September 2021. Further visits / outings will be organised as soon as the restrictions permit.

Examples of visits in previous years include:

Hyde Park Barracks – the Knightsbridge home of the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment;



*In 2018 some members of the Knightsbridge Association were treated to a fascinating tour of Chevening House*

Chevening House – a Grade 1 listed building in Kent, formerly the seat of the Earls of Stanhope now maintained under the Chevening Estate Act to serve as a country residence for a person nominated by the Prime Minister;

Kent House, Knightsbridge – named after the Duke of Kent, fourth son of George III, this handsome building is now the site of the Westminster Synagogue and home of the Scrolls of the Law in the Holy Ark rescued from the Czech Republic in 1964;



*Afternoon tea at Hyde Park Barracks*

South East London Heat and Power, Southwark – waste-to-energy facility operated by Veolia; Veolia, materials recycling facility, Southwark – materials recycling facility operated by Veolia.

## THE WEBSITE

The KA website is currently undergoing a 'refresh'. It will incorporate new, up-to-date material sourced from the Planning and Conservation, Law and Order, Licensing, Transport and Environment committees as well as information on past and future events. The events programme for 2021 is, by necessity, in abeyance while the pandemic persists. ToolKit were selected by competitive tender to help us redesign the site and we have appointed a website manager to organise content and keep it up to date. The site should go live shortly after the publication of KA's annual report

## APPRECIATIONS

### CAROL SEYMOUR-NEWTON

We are very fortunate that, with support from others, Carol has stepped up as editing 'ring master' for the 2020 annual report. She also channels untiring energy into running the Planning and Conservation committee which she chairs with consummate skill. Our thanks to her too for her wide-ranging contacts with Local Government, business and residents that serve to assist all committees in the Association.

### CHRIS BARRASS

We are grateful to Chris Barrass for chairing the Transport and Environment committee whose detailed minutes keep us well informed on the many changes taking place in this arena. This committee has a thorough grasp of the long lead time policy issues likely to affect the area – and their potential to impact residents.

### ELMAR TOIME

Printing and distribution arrangements for Newsletters and Annual Reports continue to evolve

under Elmar's thoughtful guidance. These changes have delivered material printing and distribution costs savings for which we are very grateful. His guidance on the website refresh has been an added bonus as the pandemic has pitched us into digital communication as never before. Thank you, Elmar: we hope to have your support working on both these areas in 2021.

### FRANCESCO BRENTA

Once again, our thanks to Francesco for helping to manage the Association's digital persona through our Facebook and Twitter accounts. Who was to know how important these would become through the long days of lockdown and isolation? Thank you, Francesco for persevering in this domain: the sailors are coming aboard in increasing numbers!

### MELISSA WOOLFORD

We are delighted that Melissa, a qualified architect, is able to rejoin the Planning and Conservation committee after a lapse of four years. Her knowledge of Knightsbridge and her appreciation of the architecture of the neighbourhood can make a valuable contribution. Welcome back, Melissa.

### MADELINE ELSDON

Madeline continues to provide an invaluable stream of 'street intelligence' and practical initiative using her detailed knowledge of local Police, Knightsbridge and its residents. Her proactive involvement helped to reinstate police patrols in the neighbourhood and her work in bringing rowdy 'house parties' to order is much appreciated.

### OLIVIA COX

Special thanks to Olivia for her forensic updating of the membership database. Refreshing digital records is an increasingly important task as the volume of material despatched to members increases and members/committees are not able to meet in person. Congratulations on doing this within the constraints of GDPR; and all with great good humour alongside your role as Treasurer.

### PAUL MEITNER

Paul showed admirable forbearance when KA had to reverse its stance

on the proliferation of Tables and Chairs adjacent to cafes and restaurants in order to facilitate 'al fresco' dining in support of the hospitality sector. He monitored this change with commendable attention to detail and now finds himself in pole position as Licensing becomes the last remaining constraint on activity within the new Class Use E category. Thank you, Paul for your valuable contribution.

### RAVINA MATHER

We were delighted to receive Ravina's offer of support earlier in the year. She applied herself skilfully to management of the KA website and design of the advertising offering for the annual report. Thank you Ravina; and welcome on board.

### SAMER YOUNIS

Samer joined the Planning and Conservation committee in early 2020 and we are fortunate to be able to draw on his construction management and architectural skills to help us handle an increasing number of Planning and related Licensing cases. Thank you, Samer, for the time you give to the KA.

### SIMON BIRKETT

Simon continues to work assiduously for the KA's Planning and Conservation committee. He devoted a great deal of time submitting evidence to the Examiner on behalf of the KA and the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum in connection with the review of the Westminster City Plan. We thank him for these interventions given the significance of changes to planning policy now working their way into Borough plans – and onto our streets.

### BARBARA LINTON

Lastly, our special thanks go to Barbara who has designed and – to use old-fashioned terminology – '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 GOVERNMENT'S PLANNING WHITE PAPER (PWP), New Westminster City Plan and Kensington and Chelsea Local Plan Review

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The planning system in Knightsbridge has four tiers: the National Planning and Policy Framework (written by the Government); the London Plan (written by the Mayor of London); the Westminster City Plan (written by Westminster City Council) and Kensington and Chelsea's Local Plan Review; and the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan (2018 to 2037) (written by the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (KNF)). Each tier has to be in general or strict conformity with the tiers above. The KNP was 'made' (i.e. adopted) on 12 December 2018, the Westminster City Plan (WCP) is being revised at the moment, the Intend to Publish version of the London Plan was published on 9 December 2019 and the Government's consultation

on a Planning White Paper closed on 29 October 2020. The KNF made detailed representations to the Examination in Public on the draft WCP and participated in the hearings on the plan. As a result of those representations, WCC proposed modifications to the WCP to: steer commercial activity towards existing commercial or mixed-used areas in Knightsbridge (rather than residential areas); address climate change; improve the air quality and energy policies; and look further at the arrangements for shisha smoking, mansards and the possible redevelopment of the Hyde Park Barracks land. While all this was going on, there was much debate about the Government's Planning White Paper. As proposed, it would: split local areas into

Growth, Renewal or Protected (with only Protected areas requiring planning applications); remove councillors from the approval process for planning applications; collect monies arising from planning obligations centrally before (in theory) returning it to local authorities and for use on neighbourhood projects; and potentially restrict one of the main roles of the Council and the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum to preparing 'design codes' and perhaps 'pattern books' i.e. instead of policy writing in local or neighbourhood plans. Not surprisingly, many people including Westminster City Council are worried about the potential impact of the changes on historic areas like Knightsbridge.

## GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY (GLA)

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In a cost cutting exercise, the GLA is to move from their current base near Tower Bridge to the Crystal building, a cheaper site in the Royal Docks area, which will be renamed City Hall.

The Mayoral and London Assembly elections will now take place on 6 May 2021 having being postponed due to the pandemic. There are three different 'contests' that make up GLA elections – and three different ballot papers for voters: (1) the Mayor of London; (2) the 14 Members of the London Assembly who represent London's 14 constituencies; (3) the 11 Assembly Members who represent the whole of London (London-wide Members). The



Additional Member (AM) system which is used involves voting once for a constituency member and once for a London-wide representative. A full list of the candidates, constituency

members and 11 London-wide members will be available online nearer the time. Meanwhile, further information can be gleaned from [www.londonelects.org.uk](http://www.londonelects.org.uk)

## LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Both Councils have been consulting on their revised local plans which the KA has been commenting on – see above. Other consultations have included WCC’s proposed busking policy and planned maintenance programme for 2020–21, The Councils have also been conducting regular virtual meetings with residents’ and amenity societies since lockdown was instigated – it’s all rather surreal.

### WCC

#### MEMBERS and OFFICERS

In May, due to lockdown restrictions, Cllr. Jonathan Glanz was elected Lord Mayor of Westminster in a virtual ceremony.

He was first elected to the Council to represent West End Ward in 2009, and has served in the Cabinet and on



Cllr. Jonathan Glanz,  
Lord Mayor of Westminster

several Committees. Prior to his election to the Council he had been involved in community politics, having chaired both the Marylebone Association and the Marylebone Millennium Commissions.



Debbie  
Jackson

In July Debbie Jackson joined the Council as Executive Director of Growth, Housing and Planning. Prior to this she had been GLA Built Environment Director.

### RBKC

#### MEMBERS and OFFICERS

First elected to the Council in 2010, Councillor Gerard Hargreaves represents Chelsea Riverside ward, and had been part of the Cabinet and Leadership Team from 2013, holding various portfolios. He was elected Mayor in May. Local Brompton and Hans Town ward Councillor, Sof



Cllr. Gerard Hargreaves  
RBKC Mayor

McVeigh, has been appointed Deputy Mayor.

Sue Harris is Executive Director for Environment and Communities at RBKC. She has worked in



Sue Harris

four different London Boroughs over a career of 30 years and currently leads a broad range of service areas including planning, highways, waste, culture, leisure, parks, libraries, community safety and regulatory services.

### USEFUL NUMBERS

Noise: WCC 0207641 2000  
RBKC 0207361 3002  
The Parks: 0300 061 2222

Problems with lighting, potholes, rubbish dumping and other street issues should be reported on [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com)

### USEFUL CONTACTS

#### WCC Knightsbridge/Belgravia Ward Councillors

Cllr. Tony Devenish  
[tony.devenish@london.gov.uk](mailto:tony.devenish@london.gov.uk)  
(Tony is also our GLA/TfL member)  
Cllr. Robathan  
[rrobathan@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:rrobathan@westminster.gov.uk)  
Cllr. Elizabeth Hitchcock  
[ehitchcock@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:ehitchcock@westminster.gov.uk)

#### RBKC Brompton and Hans Town Ward Councillors

Cllr. Mary Weale  
[cllr.mary.weale@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.mary.weale@rbkc.gov.uk)  
Cllr. Walaa Idris  
[cllr.walaa.idris@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.walaa.idris@rbkc.gov.uk)  
Cllr. Sof McVeigh  
[Cllr.sof.mcveigh@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.sof.mcveigh@rbkc.gov.uk)



# PLANNING REFORMS

## POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS FOR KNIGHTSBRIDGE

Matt Richards BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI  
Director – Savills Planning Residential & Business Space

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There has been a lot of change recently in the planning system, with the Government trying its hardest to reduce red tape, and get Britain building. Recent changes have come into effect, and some proposed changes are currently being consulted on which could have significant impacts on local high streets and the built environment generally.

### NEW FLEXIBILITY FOR COMMERCIAL USES AND NEW PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS TO BUILD TALLER

At the start of September a major overhaul to the well-established use class system in England came into effect. It is very much a case of "out with the old" and the individual commercial classifications A1, A3, B1 and D2 have been revoked in favour of a new use class which is entitled "Commercial, Business and Service", referred to as Class E.

Class E covers a broad range of uses including: retail, cafes and restaurants; financial and professional services; indoor sport and recreation; medical or health services (to visiting members of the public); crèche, day nursery and day centres, offices, research and development and light industrial.

This provides substantial flexibility for the future for some premises. Changing between operations within the same use class is "permitted development" and does not require planning permission, nor prior approval. It follows that a change from retail to a restaurant, an office, a gym or a nursery can all now be undertaken without the requirement to submit an application. The provisions allow for a mix of uses within buildings and premises. This could include "flexible use premises" to be a retail unit in the day and then a restaurant in the evening.

The Government has also introduced a range of new

permitted development rights that allow for upwards extensions of up to two storeys to certain commercial and residential buildings. These can apply to detached or terraced properties. There are a number of caveats that include the age of buildings, and those within Conservation Areas do not benefit from these rights. Taking into account that much of Knightsbridge has Conservation Area status, normal planning rules will apply to proposals for upwards extensions to buildings.

As expected, these changes have caused considerable concern to some groups, and a legal challenge has been launched to them. A decision is forthcoming.

### THE PLANNING WHITE PAPER – LESS RED TAPE?

This quite radical document was out for consultation until 29th October. It proposes a raft of changes to the planning system to try and make it more streamlined. One such proposed change is a dramatically different approach to the control of development, providing that new local plans should be in place within 30 months that identify three types of land – "Growth Areas suitable for substantial development", "Renewal areas suitable for development", and "Areas that are Protected".

Growth areas would include land "suitable for comprehensive development, including new settlements and urban extension sites, and areas for redevelopment, such as former industrial sites or urban regeneration sites".

Renewal areas would cover "existing built areas where smaller scale development is appropriate" and such land could include "the gentle densification and infill of residential areas, development in town centres, and development in rural areas that is not annotated as Growth or Protected Areas, such as small sites within or on the edge of villages".

Protected land would include sites which "justify more stringent development controls to ensure sustainability". This would include "areas such as green belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), conservation areas, local wildlife sites, areas of significant flood risk and important areas of green space".

It is likely that much of Knightsbridge will fall within a Protected Area, but it is not assured that conservation areas would come under the remit of 'protected land' following consultation. In Renewal Areas, there would be "a general presumption in favour of development established in legislation". This would be "achieved by strengthening the emphasis on taking a plan-led approach, with plans reflecting the general appropriateness of these areas for development". In Protected Areas, development proposals would come forward as now through planning applications being made to the Local Authority.

Neighbourhood planning is also earmarked for change. It is seen as an important means of community input by the White Paper, but changes are proposed that seek

to make it easier to develop Neighbourhood Plans. It suggests there is scope to allow smaller areas, such as individual streets, to set their own rules for the type of development they are happy to see. The detail on this is currently lacking however. The White Paper also advocates neighbourhood

plan groups helping Local Authorities to produce design guides and codes that set out general design principles for their area.

The stage is definitely set for neighbourhood planning to play an even larger role in the planning process in the future.

How much of these changes in the White Paper come to fruition remains to be seen. Consultation ran until 29th October 2020. Savills will issue a corporate response to the White Paper, which includes comments on all matters being consulted on.

## KNIGHTSBRIDGE RESIDENTS AND NEIGHBOURS

### MICHAEL CAINE AND TERENCE STAMP

#### Young Knightsbridge Residents in the Swinging Sixties

Tony Jones

Michael Caine and Terence Stamp began their illustrious acting careers almost contemporaneously in the early 1960s. Both East Enders, they were good friends and, moving West, shared accommodation locally in Ennismore Gardens Mews, Bayswater's Albion Close and in Marylebone.

Michael Caine was born in East London in 1933. In 1959 he met Terence Stamp and Peter O'Toole on stage in *The Long The Short and the Tall*. O'Toole went off to play, famously, *Lawrence of Arabia* and Caine, his understudy, took over. After modest performances in *A Hill in Korea* and *Gambit*, Caine's first notable success in film came in 1964 with *Zulu* in which he showed his acting skills, masking his Cockney roots in a convincing portrayal of an aristocratic army officer. *The Ipcress File* followed and then Terence Stamp refused the part in *Alfie* which made Caine an international star. In 1969 came a versatile switch of character: his role as gangster in *The Italian Job*. His thirst for work of any kind meant that many roles followed, notably in *Get Carter*, *A Bridge Too Far*, *Sleuth* and *The Man Who Would be King*. In 1983 his versatility was exemplified by his portrayal of Julie Walters' amiable professor in *Educating Rita* for which he won the BAFTA for Best Actor. Soon, *Hannah and Her*



*Sisters* gained him recognition at the Academy Awards, a Golden Globe for *Little Voice* and a further Academy Award for *The Cider House Rules*.

Latterly as a grandee of the industry and appreciated by a younger audience, Caine has featured in a number of Christopher Nolan films including *Inception*, the Batman sequel *The Dark Knight Rises*, *Interstellar* and Matthew Vaughan's *Kingsman: The Secret Service*. He made his latest film for Nolan, *Tenet*, this year, aged 87. Not only is Michael Caine famous for his longevity and versatility, but for his industry, with an astonishing 130 films grossing \$8 billion.

Terence Stamp was born in Stepney in 1938, the eldest of five children. After attending the Webber Academy he performed in Peter Ustinov's *Billy Budd* and

with Sir Laurence Olivier in *Term of Trial* (1962). There followed from 1965 the film version of the John Fowles novel *The Collector*, *Modesty Blaise*, *Far From The Madding Crowd* (with Julie Christie), and in 1967 Ken Loach's iconic social documentary *Poor Cow*. The next year Stamp decamped to Italy and worked with Federico Fellini, whence for a sojourn in India. He subsequently performed roles in *Coming Attraction* and two *Superman* films.

Terence Stamp was discriminating in the roles he agreed to play and he enjoyed a high rate of accreditation for his work. Among his awards were a Golden Globe for *Billy Budd*, Best Actor at Cannes for *The Collector* and a Beijing International Film Festival Award for Best Actor in *Song for Marion*.

In the early sixties Caine and Stamp were part of a hyperactive social scene which included a number of luminaries: Peter O'Toole, Sean Connery, Edna O'Brien, Vidal Sassoon, Mick Jagger, David Hockney, Julie Christie, Jean Shrimpton, Vanessa Redgrave, Stanley Kubrik, Albert Finney and his wife Anouk Aimee, who were living nearby in Brompton Square. During this period Caine had yet to earn real money but Stamp, the younger of the two, was successful,





Ennismore Gardens Mews

solvent, and generous enough to pay their bills. In Ennismore Gardens Mews their shared home had only one bedroom and they devised an ingenious way of adapting living and sleeping space in double quick time as Stamp brought in a succession of pretty girls. Later, when Caine was rich and successful, they continued to share, and Stamp was even trusting

enough to leave his current flame, the supermodel Jean Shrimpton, at the house while he went on assignment to America. On one occasion Jean Shrimpton turned up with a handsome Russian in tow. A few days later MI5 turned up too. The Russian was Captain Eugen, the consort

(as was the minister John Profumo, who was forced to resign) of the much-publicised socialite Christine Keeler.

Ostensibly Caine and Stamp were similar: both from modest East End stock, both good looking and professionally talented. But there were basic differences. Michael Caine, as his autobiography asserts, was slow to gain recognition and lacking in self-confidence.

So he is absolutely meticulous in everything he does: scrupulously polite to everyone, punctual, totally prepared for his part, and on set, withdrawn and concentrated. Conscientious and professional, perhaps, best describes him.

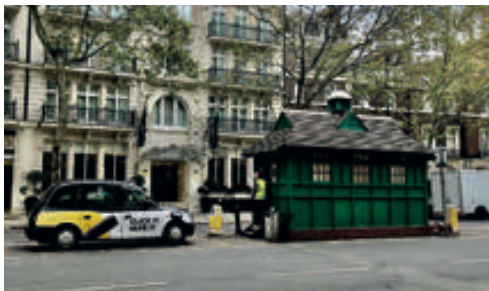
Terence Stamp, by contrast, gains early success both professionally and socially. His insouciance as a man of immense talent and charisma, chiming with the social revolution taking place at the time, meant he had, initially, a very different position in the film world from his flat mate. In 1962 when Stamp began making the award-winning films with Ustinov, Olivier and Wyler mentioned above, he was but 24 years old: Caine was nearing 30.

Sir Michael Caine has been married to wife Shakira for 47 years and has two daughters. Terence Stamp, aged 64, married Elizabeth O'Rourke in 2002 and divorced in 2008.

## LOCAL HISTORY

### CAB SHELTER HERITAGE

Matej Vipotnik



Given its age and Grade II listed status, the green cabbie shelter on the median of Brompton road opposite the Victoria & Albert Museum could qualify for an exhibition of its own.

Instead, it continues to serve classic British meals to cabbies and passing locals from 7am until 1.30 pm, as it has for well over a century.

The modern traffic signal supplements the protective iron bollard which at some point in its history seems to have suffered a

collision. In common with other shelters the kitchen window has been converted for takeaway service but the height of the windowsill makes steps or a platform a necessity for customer access.

Nicknamed 'The Bell and Horns' after a pub that used to stand across the street, the oak shingled building is one of 13 surviving shelters of the 61 built between 1875 and 1950.

No bigger than a horse and cart, it allows cabbies inside to sit around a horse shoe shaped table, while the public is served through an east-facing hatch directly from the kitchen.

Each central London shelter has its own habitués and menu, from curries to spicy Thai, with strict rules against drinking, gambling and swearing – a holdover from a more freewheeling era.

For a cheap and cheerful bacon butty and a serving of old London charm, it can't be beaten.

### MONTPELIANO

Another favourite Italian restaurant, Montpeliano, established in 1974 by Antonio Trapani in Montpelier Street, sadly closed its doors in 2019.



The KA understands that Nammos Restaurants, a Greek company, has bought the whole property and wishes to transform it into a lounge/restaurant/nightclub similar to their existing venues in Mykonos and Dubai. The KA is resolutely opposed to the introduction of a nightclub to this residential area and will keep members informed when there is a planning application.

## METAMORPHOSIS

Stefano Fraquelli

### A favourite hostelry to change

My father and his partner opened Zia Teresa to an enormously appreciative neighbourhood 64 years ago. The restaurant's continued success has, of course, been due to our dedication to authentic Italian cooking and equally authentic welcome. Nevertheless, to thrive over so many years has required a consistent, yet gradual, evolution. Changes that have been made to menu, decor, or seat numbers, to name but a few items, have been so imperceptible that those customers that have



returned over three generations continue to remember our restaurant as unchanged and immutable.

To quote from Lucchino Visconti's masterpiece film *The Leopard*, "if we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change". Thus, perhaps human warmth and, dare I say it in these bizarre times, the

need for social interaction has not changed.

Yet there comes a time when only revolution will do. Italy, beautifully illustrated in the film, was unified under Garibaldi in 1848 only to be quickly returned to the Monarchy of Victor Emmanuel shortly after. I confess to being somewhat high minded about the parallel I'm about to draw.

We propose to reinvent Zia Teresa to better reflect the heritage of my father, who was born and raised on the shores of Lake Como. I attach an image of what will likely be its new identity after this crazy pandemic has run its course.

## GAS IN KNIGHTSBRIDGE: THEN AND NOW

Nigel Cox

Most Knightsbridge residents probably shudder when they hear the words "Gas Mains Replacement Works", recalling months of terrible traffic jams in the Brompton Road and other nearby highways. What is the background to these works? And what is the history of gas in Knightsbridge?

### HISTORY

The world's first public gasworks opened in Westminster in 1813, just off Great Peter Street near Marsham Street. The site is now covered by the new Home Office building, which replaced the earlier (and much hated) tower blocks of the Department of the Environment.



Scientists had known for over a century that heated coal gave off a gas which burnt with a bright flame, but only in 1807 did a Moravian German entrepreneur, Frederick Winsor (1763-1830), demonstrate in Pall Mall the possibility of using gas to light London's busy, and sometimes dangerous, streets.

After much lobbying, the Gas Light and Coke Company (GLCC) received a Royal Charter in 1812. Its gasworks were a success, and in 1813 it lit Westminster Bridge and the approaches to Parliament. By 1815 it had laid 30 miles of gas mains in central London, and by 1819 290 miles.

The speed with which the new technology





was adopted was remarkable (faster than the spread of mobile telephones and the internet in the 1990s), but gas was cheaper than the old tallow or whale-oil lights and soon became much brighter. The GLCC built more gasworks, at Moorfields and Brick Lane. New gas companies sprang up round London, in the provinces, the US and Paris.

Gas was at first used solely for lighting. From the outset a few factories and public and private buildings were lit by gas, but until the 1860s, much the greatest use was for streetlamps. From the 1890s gas mantles were used above the gas flames. (Mantles are fabric bags impregnated with metal nitrates; when the fabric is first heated the fibres melt away, leaving a ceramic shell.) Until the 1930s lamp-men lit each streetlight at night and extinguished it in the morning. (Some lamps at Temple were still manually lit and extinguished daily until the 1970s.)

The GLCC declined to extend their mains west to Chelsea and Knightsbridge, but from 1820 a Brentford company was lighting the turnpike road from there to Kensington, and in 1821 the Imperial Gas Company was founded and began supplying Knightsbridge and surrounding areas from gasworks first in north Bloomsbury and then at St Pancras.

Gas had originally been consumed as it was produced, in the evening and early morning, but storage techniques soon developed. In 1824 Imperial Gas built a gasholder at Sands End in Fulham to store gas produced at St Pancras. The company later also built a gasworks here. A second Sands End gasholder, built in 1829-30, survives today, listed Grade II\*, within the new King's Road Park development. It is by far the world's oldest gasholder and twice the diameter of most other large gasholders of the time.

From the 1830s Knightsbridge consumers could also obtain

gas from other companies. They produced gas in Pimlico (Equitable) and Vauxhall (London), and, from 1845, Ladbroke Grove (Western). Knightsbridge residents were lucky not to have a gasworks even closer to home: early gas plants were considered noxious – noisy, smelly, polluting and unsafe.

Gas lighting was not seriously challenged by electric lighting until the end of the 19th century. (The world's first electric streetlamps were installed in Paris in May 1878, and later that year they were operating on the new Thames Embankment and Holborn Viaduct.)

Use of gas for cooking was pioneered by the Reform Club in Pall Mall in 1841 and became popular in wealthy homes from mid-century. It gradually became more widespread, particularly after the invention of the oven thermostat in 1923s.

In the later 19th century gas water heaters, or geysers, above sinks and baths, had also become popular. Gas fires were given a boost by the introduction of ceramic radiants in 1905. The Clean Air Acts of 1956, limiting the use of solid fuels in cities, also promoted gas boilers for central heating.

Consolidation of the gas industry began early. In the 1870s and 1880s the original GLCC absorbed the Equitable, Western, Imperial and London companies and became much the largest company in the Metropolis. In 1949 the gas



industry was nationalised, and the GLCC became the main constituent of the North Thames Gas Board.

Between 1967 and 1977 Britain converted from coal gas to natural gas. In 1972 the regional gas boards were merged into the British Gas Corporation, and in 1986 the industry was privatised.

## CURRENT MAINS REPLACEMENT WORKS

Nowadays in the UK the National Grid uses high pressure pipes to transmit gas from entry points (eg



coastal gas terminals) to distributing companies, who use medium pressure pipes to distribute it to consumers. Our distributor is Cadent (Gas Ltd), the UK's largest gas distribution network, whose roots go back through the National Grid, British Gas and North Thames Gas Board to the GLCC of 1812. It receives gas from the National Grid at the old Sands End site in Fulham, where it operates a Pressure Reduction Station and Depot.

The medium pressure large diameter gas mains under our streets are on average 100 years old – some date from the 1880s – and they have been showing their age: in just five years there were some 550 failures in London north of the river, requiring often disruptive repairs. In our area the state of the main running from Fulham to Hyde Park along the Brompton Road was of particular concern.

Cadent and their contractors are now engaged in a multi-

phase project to replace London's old cast iron pipes – some of them of 3 feet diameter – with tough, modern, polyethylene pipes. After intensive consultations with local Councils and Transport for London about how to minimise the necessary road closures, work in Knightsbridge began in Brompton Road in May 2019. By using innovative technology for inspecting the existing pipes and by threading the new pipes through the old ones, Cadent aimed to avoid any interruptions of the gas supply.

Near Brompton Oratory a new governor (a device for regulating pressure) had to be installed, and works here unfortunately over-ran schedule. However, the 2020 works have so far been completed on time, despite unexpected challenges – including the discovery that contractors working near the Mandarin Oriental Hotel a decade or so ago had poured large quantities of cement round the pipes.

The Scotch Corner junction involved particularly complex traffic management issues, and Cadent invested £100,000 in a 16-week rewriting of software so that traffic lights could be reprogrammed. Without this, traffic delays would have been much worse. In January work will move on to the eastern stretch of Knightsbridge, between Sloane Street and Hyde Park Corner.

The new pipes are expected to last round 80 years – until the end of the century. They would be able to carry hydrogen if it is decided in future to switch from natural gas for environmental reasons. (The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum advocates “net zero now”, and two recent developments approved in Knightsbridge will not be connected to the gas grid.)



Gas light in Trevor Square

## GAS LIGHTS TODAY

Some Knightsbridge residents may not be aware that, although domestic gas lighting is now past history, there are still many gas streetlights in our part of London. Their soft parchment-coloured light contrasts with the harder electric streetlights.

Trevor Square in Knightsbridge (built 1819-1827) still boasts five gas-lamps, and there are others above Queen's Gate (leading into Kensington Gardens). Other nearby locations include:

- Kensington Palace Gardens (both sides)
- Hyde Park, the Green Park & St James's Park
- The Mall (north side) & Horse Guards Road (Park side)

The Hyde Park lights (nearly 200 of them) include attractive crowned globes along Serpentine Road. In 1990 British Gas presented 20 new standards for Rotten Row, to mark its 300th anniversary.



A crowned globe in Hyde Park

Altogether Central London has a total of some 1500 gas lights. (Occasionally one sadly falls victim to a careless lorry driver, but fortunately English Heritage have a good record of restoring and reinstating them.) About 200 are privately maintained (including in the Palace of Westminster), but a team of five gas lamplighters

## Rotten Row

The Row was built for King William III and Queen Mary II in 1690 as a private carriage drive between Westminster and their Kensington Palace. It was apparently the first British road to have streetlights, originally 300 whale-oil lamps. Although its name is often said to be a corruption of the French “Route du Roi” or King's Road, in fact it probably described the road's surface: in 17th/18th Century English one meaning of “rotten” was loose or friable, and the Row was not paved or cobbled but covered with a mixture of gravel, sand and crushed tree bark.

Some lamp standards bear the cipher of the monarch in whose reign they were erected: examples from George IV's reign (1820–1830) can be seen in the Green Park and Birdcage Walk. The most recent were put up in 2009 round the statue of the late Queen Mother (1900-2002) between the Mall and Carlton Gardens. The Queen is said strongly to have favoured use of gas lighting here. There are also many gas lights in the grounds of Buckingham Palace.



from British Gas look after the other 1300, visiting each lamp fortnightly to adjust the timing, clean the glass and make checks. All now have pilot lights (like gas boilers), but about one third have clockwork timers, needing manual winding.

London's current inventory of streetlamps may seem small compared with the world record holder, Berlin, which has some 37,000 in operation. Nonetheless they are an elegant reminder of the city's pioneering role in an important chapter of world technological and industrial history.

Green Park George IV cypher



## HIDING IN PLANE SIGHT

Matt Brown proselytizes the London plane tree, one of the great icons of London to which many are blind

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‘The what tree?’ That’s the usual response whenever I start listing the virtues of the London plane. Members of the London Society will no doubt be familiar with this tree, but awareness is not universal, or even common. Plane trees equal blank faces. Everyone’s heard of the oak, ash, willow and beech, but the plain old plane grows outside the canopy of cognizance. This needs redressing. The London plane is one of the most common, important and easily recognised

trees in the capital. It’s time to sing its praises.

Once you are aware of the plane, you see them everywhere. They are very distinctive. No other tree has that kaleidoscopic, peeling bark, supposedly adept at soaking up roadside pollutants. Those confident, grasping leaves, like hyperbolized maple, reach out in all directions, as though to shake hands with the city. And who could mistake the spiky seed balls, which

dangles suggestively all through the year? The tree can be identified with ease by any of these hallmarks.

The origins of the plane are shrouded in mystery. It’s a hybrid, formed from Eurasian and American parents some time in the 17th century. The earliest surviving specimen is thought to be ‘Barney’, a mighty resident of Barnes, planted around the time of the Great Fire. Victoria Embankment was the first major thoroughfare in London

to be lined with planes, in 1871. Some 121,000 can now be found in central London alone. They are synonymous with our city. The tree is called the London plane across the Commonwealth. It stands as our arboreal ambassador from Canada to New Zealand.

Why do so many Londoners not recognize these emblematic trees? It's partly thanks to the name, which is hard to dissociate from air travel. Then, as we've seen, the plane is not a native species. It does not resonate through British tradition or folklore. Those of us who did not grow up in a large town or city may never have encountered one before moving to London.

Yet there's so much to love about these trees. Few could argue against the plane as a handsome addition to the streetscape. It is one of the taller, leafier species planted along our roads. Just take a stroll along the Broad Walk on the eastern edge of Hyde Park, which is thought to be the longest double-lined avenue of plants in Europe. It is glorious in high summer. And the plane is more than simple eye candy. According to Forest Research, in comparison to other large canopy trees, the London plane is ranked first for pollution removal and second for carbon storage. It's both attractive and beneficial. The oldest tree in the Square Mile, a magnificent plane on Cheapside, has even affected local planning. Neighbouring buildings are restricted to two storeys – unique on Cheapside – to protect its health.

They may not play a starring role in English history like the mighty oaks that furnished the Royal Navy, or the yews that won Agincourt, but planes are finding modern uses. In Malet

Street, Bloomsbury, where the planes bow like judo players, students use the trunks as pinboards. Each tree displays a thousand pinpricks, the scars of tacks that once supported the words of Marx, King or Thunberg. Over in Elephant Park, late the Heygate Estate, a few semi-mature planes of the 1970s are now engirdled with play equipment. Here, slides and climbing frames wrap around the great plants, to the delight of my three-year-old. They've even entered the Space Age. Along the west side of Kennington Road, the vast planes each carry the name of an Apollo astronaut. Nobody seems to remember why – including the nearby British Interplanetary Society. Look up, too, in Acton Park, where one of the trees is home to a sculpture of a python. Snakes on a plane.

Like all trees, the plane has its challenges. The plant does not hold up well in drought conditions, which could spell problems such as climate

change bites. Massaria, a nonnative fungal disease that has doomed many lanes on mainland Europe, is another problem waiting to happen. Canker stain and bacterial leaf scorch are equal threats. The plane also has its human detractors. Some people find the tree obnoxious in late spring and early summer, when spiky 'trichome' fibres from the leaves take to the air and cause eye irritation (the pollen/hayfever effect, by contrast, is not a huge problem with planes).

As we fall deeper into the climate emergency, though, London's trees should become all the more precious and celebrated. The London plane – *Platanus x hispanica* – is one of the greatest assets we have to keep our city cool, drained and pure of air. Perhaps it simply needs a rebrand, from plain old plane to the Star of London tree.

*Reproduced by kind permission of The Journal of the London Society.*



*Plane trees in Ennismore Gardens*



# THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE ISMAILI CENTRE, LONDON

Salimah Lalji, Ismail Centre, London

Crispin Boyle



This year marks the thirty-five years of the Ismaili Centre's presence, in the heart of London's cultural quarter, in South Kensington.

On 24 April 1985, The Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher – then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom – officially opened the Ismaili Centre, London. On that occasion she was joined by His Highness the Aga Khan, government leaders, diplomats and leaders of the community.

## ISMAILI COMMUNITY

The Shia Ismaili Muslims (Ismailis) are a community of ethnically and culturally diverse peoples living in over 25 countries around the world.

His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan is the 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Ismaili Muslims, and a direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad. He succeeded his grandfather Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, as the Imam, on 11 July 1957 at the age of 20.

The Ismaili community has had a well-established presence across the UK over the past half century. Priding themselves on being forward-minded and engaged citizens, the Ismailis are known for their strong ethic of service and contribution to civil society, in keeping with the values of the faith.

## ISMAILI CENTRES

The Ismaili Centre, London, became the first in a series of Centres to be built around the world, including Vancouver, Lisbon, Dubai, Dushanbe, and Toronto, with one more currently in the design phase, to be built in Houston. Each Centre incorporate spaces for social and cultural gatherings, intellectual engagement and reflection, as well as spiritual contemplation. They are bridges of friendship and understanding, and work to enhance relationships among communities, government and civil society.

## ISMAILI CENTRE, LONDON

The Ismaili Centre, London is nestled among such glorious London heritage buildings as the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Natural History Museum. It serves as an ambassadorial building, reflecting traditional principles of Islamic design, while incorporating contemporary elements from the society in which it is situated. It responds in harmony to South Kensington's built environment, adopting an embellished lighter-hued façade and a chamfered corner.

In a speech at the Foundation Ceremony of the Ismaili Centre, His Highness the Aga Khan made reference to this unusual design brief: "In drawing up their plans, the architects faced a new and unusual challenge as this Centre must serve the requirements of the Ismaili community as well as to establish a presence worthy of its proximity to the distinguished public and historic buildings which surround us.

"The mass and silhouette of the new structure are therefore strong and simple and in no way attempt to compete nor interfere with, the varied and imposing façades of the neighbouring buildings. The Ismaili Centre,



Crispin Boyle

Details of the exterior architectural finishes.



Gary Otte

The fountain pool in the Entrance Hall follows the inter-weaving geometrical floor pattern, characteristic of Islamic art, executed in white marble, Brazilian blue granite and inlaid stainless steel. The calligraphic Basmallah adorns the far wall.

being designed for a Muslim community, must reflect, even if only discretely, an Islamic mood whilst being sympathetic to the character of its surroundings."

### ARCHITECTURE

This first Ismaili Centre was widely acclaimed by architectural critics for its design and craftsmanship. The building was designed by the Casson Condor Partnership and built by the British firm, Fairclough Ltd, using the highest standard of workmanship. A number of experts also contributed to its design including the late Professor Oleg Grabar – a specialist in Islamic Art at Harvard University at that time, and Professor William Porter – the former Dean of the School of Architecture at MIT. Some of the detailed interiors were designed by a German Muslim – the late Karl



Crispin Boyle

Detail showing windows and panels in stainless steel, teak and bevelled glass, with three different surface finishes to the granite.

Schlamminger – who was a renowned sculptor and designer who drew inspiration from various parts of the Muslim world.

The Ismaili Centre's exterior has used materials and colours which are compatible with those of the surrounding buildings while at the same time in keeping with the traditional Islamic idiom and its colours of whites, light greys and blues.



Crispin Boyle



*This unique skylight casts geometrical patterns on the floor below.*

Internally, the building expresses a distinctly modern Islamic identity through the use of marble and cut woodwork grille (or mashrabiya in Arabic), a prominent heptagonal water fountain at the entrance, calligraphy and geometric ornamentation on its surfaces, as well as the prominence of light as it moves through the building.

The Ismaili Centre, London contains a purpose built space, called the Zamana Space, intended to be part of the rich cultural corridor of Exhibition Road and to foster dialogue among communities about the art, society and culture of the Muslim world.

At the top of the building sits the Roof Garden, designed by the Boston-based Japanese firm Sasaki Associates. Described as one of London's 'best kept secrets' it sits on an independent structure, planned and built as a separate entity. The roof features a chahar bagh, or four-part garden, borrowing from Mughal landscape heritage while simultaneously recalling the Fatimid tradition of rooftop gardens.

On a clear day one can see the three domes of the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Natural History Museum and the Brompton Oratory towering above The Ismaili Centre.

## HISTORY

Situated at Cromwell Gardens, the history of the site can be traced back to the 1860s when it became a development of seven "first rate houses". The plans were curtailed somewhat by neighbouring residents, who secured the right to keep the

eastern apex of the triangular plot free of building and eventually become the public garden it is today.

In 1937, the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee acquired the island site for the purpose of constructing the National Theatre. However, the Second World War broke out in 1939, delaying the project and in time, it was realised that the site was too small for the ambitions of a National Theatre. In 1942 the land was exchanged by the National Theatre Committee in favour of a site on the South Bank of the Thames – the current location of the National Theatre.

His Highness the Aga Khan secured the land in the late 1970s for the establishment of the first Ismaili Centre. The foundation laying ceremony was performed by the Late Lord Christopher Soames on 06 September 1979.

The building comprises of a prayer hall, offices, meeting rooms and a social space. As well as being a working

Gary Otte



*The Roof Garden by night showing the central fountain connected by radial channels to the four corner pools.*

office during the day, the Ismaili Centre hosts lectures, talks and music events as well as welcoming guests from the wider community, through events such as Open House Day and other activities as part of the Exhibition Road Cultural Group.

Since its opening in 1985, the Ismaili Centre has been fulfilling its pledge to foster greater understanding between peoples. Architecturally respectful of its surroundings while emanating a distinctly Islamic character, it reaches out to Londoners and invites them to contemplate a thinking and thoughtful Muslim

*Salimah Lalji,  
Deputy Communications Co-ordinator  
Ismaili Centre, London  
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community, one that is rich in history, culture and ideas, and has many stories to tell.

It is not the National Theatre, but the Ismaili Centre, London has become a place where stories are told – a stage for

fostering an ever-greater understanding between East and West.

For more information visit [www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org) and [www.the.ismaili](http://www.the.ismaili).

*An aerial view of the  
Ismaili Centre, London*

Sadru Verjee



## THE AGA KHAN CENTRE



In 2018, the Aga Khan Centre was officially opened in the heart of London's Knowledge Quarter in Kings Cross. A place for education, cultural exchange and insight into Muslim civilisations, the building is the UK home for three organisations founded by His Highness the Aga Khan.

Designed by Fumihiko Maki, one of Japan's most distinguished contemporary

architects the Aga Khan Centre is designed to represent the values of openness, dialogue and respect for different viewpoints (pluralism). The architecture incorporates a collection of gardens, courtyards and terraces that provides an insight into the diversity and influence of Islamic landscape design around the world and through history.

[www.agakhancentre.org.uk](http://www.agakhancentre.org.uk)



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The most important enhancement is underway at the junction of Sloane Street and Brompton Road; a brand-new development is being built behind the retained and restored historic façades. It will deliver seven magnificent flagship stores, 67,000 sqft of state-of-the-art office accommodation, 33 luxurious rental apartments arranged around an private courtyard, and a beautiful rooftop restaurant with a ground floor café.

In addition, significant improvements to the public realm are being made, which include a wider pavement on Brompton Road, a new entrance to the Knightsbridge tube station as well as the introduction of a step-free access to the platforms from pedestrian walkway Hooper's Court.

2021 will see the opening of Burberry's new flagship at 1 Sloane Street, on the corner of Sloane Street and Brompton Road and the completion of the six further retail units, the office building and the rooftop restaurant with ground floor cafe.

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## SAY HELLO TO KNIGHTSBRIDGE'S FAVOURITE STREET SWEEPER

Meet **Joseph**, the Veolia street sweeper who has been keeping Knightsbridge clean and safe for the public for **over 20 years**.

"It feels like yesterday that I started working for Veolia. I remember being over the moon when I got the job. London is a lovely city and I joined the Veolia team to contribute to keeping it tidy, which is so important."

Joseph begins his shift at 6am, and sweeps Brompton Road, Trevor Square, Trevor Place and Sloane Street on his regular round.

"It's wonderful to see Knightsbridge coming to life each day. When the streets are nicely swept, it's as if the city gets a fresh start."

Knightsbridge's favourite street sweeper is well-known among his colleagues for the dedication and care he puts into his work, and for always carrying his favourite broom. "People laugh, but I really like the big 3-foot broom - it's the biggest one you can get, and helps to clean the pavement with one quick movement."

Being an active person, Joseph loves interacting with those who live and work in Knightsbridge. "It's so nice when people take a moment to say 'Hello, how are you? It's nice to see you.' People are friendly and appreciate the work I do to keep the area clean, and this makes me happy."

Veolia operates the Westminster City Council Commercial Waste Services, offering low-cost, easy-to-use, reliable and environmentally friendly services for businesses. For more information on how we can accommodate all your waste, recycling and street cleansing needs, please visit: [Westminster.gov.uk/commercialwaste](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/commercialwaste)

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## Their nourishment – Our future

There's a crisis in the way our children are eating. Lack of healthy fresh food is leading to obesity and poor performance in school. Research shows that bad eating habits can start from the earliest years. That's why Alexandra Rose Charities has an urgent new purpose. Starting this Autumn, we are running a pilot project to see if we can help mothers on low incomes to give their families healthier food. It's part of the Mayor of London's healthy eating initiative. The pilots are planned to run in four London boroughs: Camden, Greenwich, Hackney and Waltham Forest. We will double the money mothers can get from the

Healthy Start programme if they spend it in designated food co-ops or farmers' markets. Please help us fund this important project.

£3.10 doubles the cost of one Healthy Start voucher. £12.40 helps a young mother buy healthy food for a month.



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*“Santa, you’re on mute”*



Christmas might be a little different this year, but may it still bring you happiness, joy and Christmas cheer.

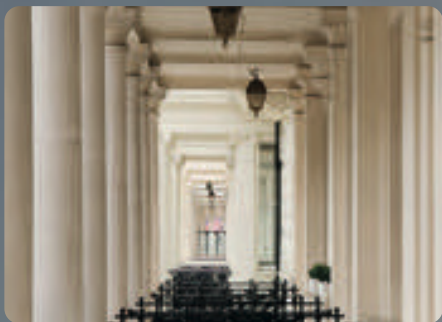
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Our homes have become our offices, our children's schools and our families' places of shelter. This is changing the kind of homes we want to live in and build. Our lawyers are at the heart of many of these decisions and are able to assist across the spectrum from homes in the heart of London to those deep in the country.

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Cover: A deserted Brompton Road during the first lockdown of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, with rainbow shop windows showing support for key workers.