



1961 – 2011

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

June 2011

Dear Member

It was tremendous to see so many of you at the fiftieth anniversary dinner at The House of Lords. The event was beautifully organized and culminated with a fascinating talk from Oscar winning film producer Lord Putnam. Our grateful thanks to Baroness Hooper for hosting us so graciously and to the Anniversary Sub-Committee for all of their hard work.

At the dinner, I did notice and was particularly pleased to see that there is a new generation of members starting to get involved with the association. Perhaps more than other similar organizations, we depend heavily on the work of dedicated volunteers. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to each one of you to demonstrate your commitment to the community; we really are all in it together.

But first, having now got my feet under the desk as Chairman I have had a chance to analyse the KA's finances. Many of you appear to be under an illusion that we are flush with cash and I know that many of you were unhappy that one of my first acts on being elected was to raise the dues by £10 a year. Please let me explain the situation.

We have two main sources of income: membership dues and advertising in the annual report, bringing in a total of about £14,000 each year. These numbers have been higher in the past but we feel it prudent to be conservative going forward due to the changes that are taking place within the KA and the uncertain economic climate. Our costs – which as we all know only ever seem to go up

- meanwhile are roughly £21,000 divided between: AGM and other meetings, mailings and administration; planning and other advice; information technology; and the amortization of the cost of our 130 or so life members who will continue to reap the benefits of membership but will not be paying in anything.

Before you start scrutinizing the accounts and correcting my figures, please bear in mind that these are broad strokes numbers. But all things being equal, £14,000 coming in and £21,000 going out means we are spending money at a rate of £7,000 each year.

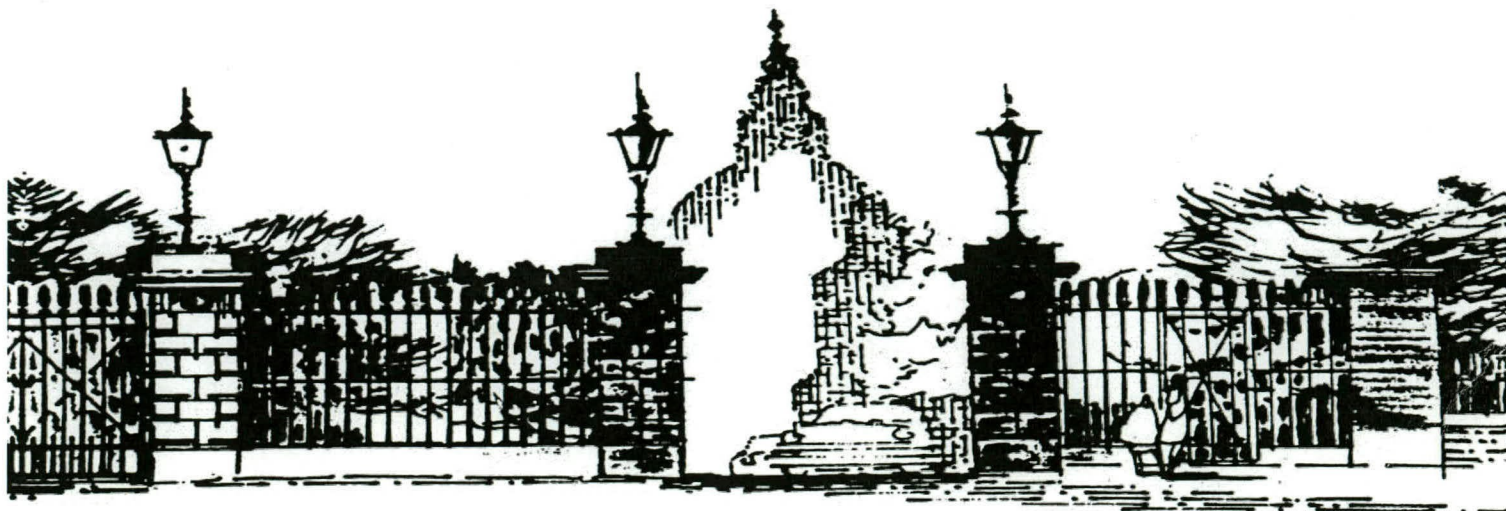
PLANNING AND CONSERVATION

Subterranean Development

Subterranean developments continue to cause anger and intolerable disturbance to neighbouring property owners. London is the target for developers whose clientele seem to need several layers of basement to accommodate swimming pools, gymnasias, media rooms and car parking. Pressure from WCC, RBKC and Residents Associations is building to persuade Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to impose much tougher restrictions.

Natural History Museum

Together with other local Associations, we continue to battle against proposals to pave over the East Lawn to facilitate events which in recent years have covered the lawn for the greater part of the year. The Museum's Grounds Strategy document seeks not so much to protect the green spaces around it – historically part of the



President: The Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge

Vice-President: The Lady Grade

Chairman: Yoshi Nishio, *Vice-Chairmen:* Edward Davies-Gilbert, Carol Seymour-Newton,

Hon. Treasurer: Phyllis Lusher.

Museum's setting – as to perpetuate the events whilst sacrificing the setting. A more recent report commissioned by the Museum from Montagu Evans did little to alter the objections we had made to RBKC's draft Supplementary Planning Document on the Museum, which we all felt needed to be much more strongly worded in order to give appropriate protection to the much valued green spaces.

V&A Exhibition Road Courtyard Competition

Amanda Levete Architects won the international design competition for the V&A's Exhibition Road development. The firm was selected from more than 110 expressions of interest in the project. The proposed plan will create a public courtyard for installations and events, new gallery space at lower level for the museum's exhibitions and an entrance from the newly landscaped Exhibition Road.

Knightsbridge Palace Hotel

The construction stage is on schedule to be completed in six and a half months time. The hotel is to be known as the Bulgari Hotel and Residences.

The Knightsbridge Estate

Bounded by Brompton Road, Hans Crescent, Basil Street and Sloane Street is owned by Sir Stuart Lipton's company, Chelsfield. A meeting is to be held shortly for members of the KA committee to be updated on future plans.

Kensington Palace Loggia Appeal

The Planning Inspectorate has allowed The Historic Royal Palaces' appeals on both designs for a loggia to mark the new entrance on the Palace's eastern façade. The KA agreed with RBKC that they were too ornate.

22-26 Brompton Road Appeal Dismissed

The appeal for change of use at 22-26 Brompton Road from retail to restaurant use was dismissed. The main reason for the dismissal: "The loss of retail floor space at this location is plainly contrary to development plan policy." We had written to the inspector pointing out that the Brompton Road area was almost at saturation point with an excess of some 40 restaurants /cafes / eateries in close proximity.

The Royal Parks

Bomber Command Memorial

The foundation stone of the £6m memorial was laid in Green Park, near Hyde Park Corner on 4th May. The Memorial should be completed by May 2012. Although there was a huge amount of support for the memorial, there were some who felt that it was oversized.

Serpentine Sackler Gallery at the Magazine

Following a public exhibition in May, plans to convert the former munitions store into an art gallery were submitted to WCC. Architect Zaha Hadid's scheme which restores the original building includes a modern extension.

Serpentine 2011 Pavilion

The 11th Pavilion commission in the Gallery's annual series is by the Swiss architect Peter Zumthor. It will incorporate a specially created garden by the Dutch designer Piet Oudolf. The Pavilion will be open from July until October.

Great Exhibition Project

In May The Royal Parks launched celebrations to mark 160 years of being open to the public with a new display of plaques commemorating The Great Exhibition of 1851. The

plaques have been installed on the perimeter paths of the 1851 site.

London Olympics 2012

Two events will be held in August to help prepare for the Olympic Triathlon and Marathon Swimming which are to take place in Hyde Park next year.

Events, June to September – look out for road closures

22 June – 3 July Hyde Park Concert Series

8-10 July Fan1 Fan Zone, East Albert Lawn, Kensington. Gardens

17 July Race for Life (Cancer Research), football pitches, Hyde Park

23 July BBC Human, Albert Lawn, Kens. Gardens

24 July UK Gospel Music Festival, the Cockpit, Hyde Park

29-30 July Mezze Festival, West Albert Lawn, Kensington. Gardens

6-7 August Triathlon World Championships, the Cockpit, Hyde Park

14 August Marathon Swimming Event, the Cockpit, Hyde Park

Licensing and Tables and Chairs

In recent months various attempts have been made to fill up the space created by the newly pedestrianised section of Hans Crescent with tables and chairs, and to obtain licences running late into the night. The KA opposed two applications by Harrods, one for planning permission to build an outdoor café behind the exit from the tube station, the second for a licence to sell alcohol from it. The application was for indoor and outdoor seating for 66 drinkers/diners with an alcohol licence operating until 10pm. A similar café, Ladurée, on the other side of Harrods, has caused considerable nuisance to residents. The KA, with the backing of local Ward Councillors, distributed leaflets explaining how to make a valid representation to RBKC and well over a hundred residents objected. We are delighted to say that, in the light of all the objections, both the planning and the licensing applications have been withdrawn.

The KA and local councillors have also opposed an application by The Gran Caffé, on the corner of Basil Street and the same pedestrianised section of Hans Crescent, for 14 tables and 56 chairs comprising a timber plinth deck, fence and canopy. This has now also been withdrawn. The arrival of warmer weather heralds the return of pedicabs playing loud music late into the night as they tour our streets (for further details, see the report of the Law and Order Committee. The outdoor tables with shisha-pipe smoking at the café premises along the north side of Brompton Road act as a magnet for this anti-social behaviour. The KA is monitoring the situation, which reaches its peak in July and August, and has asked the local authorities to impose a 10pm limit on outside drinking.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Triborough Service Proposals

WCC, RBKC and Hammersmith & Fulham intend to join up many of their services, sharing directors and staff, but thankfully excluding planning and licensing for example, services with which the Association has most to

do. When consulted the KA said it had no objection in *principle* to combining some of the services but felt that separate chief executives and directors of several of the services including planning and transportation, should be maintained in the three boroughs.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS

Renewing Planning Policy

The present statutory framework for planning policy requires Councils to produce three separate documents. The first of these, the Core Strategy, has been through public inquiries in both RBKC and WCC at which the KA was represented. The City Management Plans will contain the basic planning policies that will be applied to new planning applications. The Local Implementation Plans will contain twenty year strategies for improving transportation and the public realm. These plans are still going through their adoption processes. WCC's consultation on draft versions ended in March.

The Localism Bill

This Bill reached its report stage on 17th May. There are a very wide range of things in it. Councillors are to be allowed to get involved in discussing local planning applications without being told they cannot vote in committee because they are prejudiced. Local communities are to be given the right to take over a community centre or a pub which would otherwise close. Local referendums on local issues will be possible. The Mayor will get more power over housing and economic development. Neighbourhoods will be able to make their own development plans!

(Notes on the Bill are posted on the KA website – www.knightsbridgeassociation.org.uk – under the news section. We are grateful to John Walker, Operational Director, Development and Planning at WCC for allowing us to use his briefing notes on the Bill. We would point out that as the Bill is currently going through Parliament, revisions will be made and this briefing is based on the initial submissions).

TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT

Exhibition Road

The Committee has kept a close watching brief on the Exhibition Road project over the last two years. Our objective has been to support the improvement to the environment in this important museum and university complex whilst ensuring that safety standards were met and that the interests of local residents and businesses were respected.

As members know, the intention is to allow Exhibition Road to become visually a single mixed use area, whilst ensuring that there is sufficient segregation of pedestrians and motor traffic. The physical works are now expected to be completed before the winter, having been delayed by about six months due to bad weather and the relaying of services. The RBKC staff responsible for project management and the WCC consultants have been extremely helpful in keeping us informed of the development of the design.

Our current concerns in respect of the physical works relate to the finalisation of the traffic layout, particularly at

the junction with Kensington Gore and the Royal Parks. The primary concern here has been to ensure both a high capacity for the east – west movement on Kensington Gore, which is a TfL strategic route, and north – south pedestrian capacity to link Exhibition Road with the Royal Parks. We are continuing to press for the design to include the turning movements needed to minimise traffic flow through residential zones in Knightsbridge.

We are concerned that insufficient attention is being given by TfL to the capacity problems in South Kensington Underground Station and the tunnel connection to the museums, which are vital for school parties. We also believe that the museums provide inadequate instructions for schools to brief their coach drivers, who find there is extremely limited parking near the museums. Perhaps this is part of a wider problem, that the many parties with an interest in the area are not as yet considering the impact of their own activities on the wider community.

We are also watching the development of proposals at two levels – the use which is to be made of the space on a regular basis and arrangements for “special events” every two years or so.

On the first, we have already noted the failure of the museums to control private events which have spilled out from their private roads into Exhibition Road and have created noise there without a licence. This has been drawn to the Council's attention.

On the second, we have attended a number of meetings to discuss the guidelines for major events, the first of which is to be in 2012 to coincide with the Olympics and the Diamond Jubilee. We circulated the draft guidelines to Committee members and have provided a detailed response. In particular, we believe that any events should respect and enhance the existing quality and atmosphere of the Road, as a centre of learning and art, and not allow it to become a temporary market, fair or street café area.

Parking

Westminster City Council (WCC) has announced recently the result of its 18 month review of the current parking arrangements. WCC is consulting on eight draft policy proposals which can be seen in detail on WCC's website www.westminster.gov.uk. Comments can be submitted to WCC online or by email until 23 June. Our main concern is to address the pressures on our area from the high demand for Residents Parking spaces, not least during the day, and circulating traffic. We will therefore: support proposals for 24 hour Residents Parking throughout our area; support the extension of controlled (metered) parking hours; support additional charges for second and third Resident Parking permits; oppose other measures that would intensify pressure on our Residents Parking spaces (e.g. a visitor parking scheme); and encourage WCC to take bolder steps to improve air quality. We will also be urging WCC again to split the huge Zone A to stop people from far away using Residents Parking spaces close to our homes.

Double yellow lines

We are being encouraged to support more double yellow lines instead of single yellow lines in our area as a means of addressing late night parking by chauffeurs, private hire vehicles and others using local clubs and restaurants. This seems sensible to us. We will again ask

WCC to post consultation notices on street furniture so residents and businesses can comment on proposals for specific locations if they wish.

Air quality petition

Please sign the Campaign for Clean Air in London's petition which commends the Mayor for his promise to improve air quality in the area formerly covered by the western extension of the congestion charging zone and calls on him to ensure monitoring is maintained in our area. See <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/cleanairlondon.html>

LAW & ORDER

We are now into the fifth renewal of the dispersal zone around Harrods. This has been in operation for 2 years and there have been 450 dispersals of beggars. The zone has made a massive difference but every six months we still have to prove the necessity for a renewal. We have a new borough commander in RBKC, Chief Superintendent Jason Gwilliam and it is hoped that he and the council will continue to support us.

Through Mark Field MP we have been in correspondence with Grant Shapps, Minister for Housing, regarding the problem of squatting in Central London which has affected us here in Knightsbridge. We have been assured that the government is looking to tighten the law and give home owners greater powers to evict squatters. Meanwhile if you see anyone trying to enter an unoccupied property and suspect they may be attempting to squat please contact the police immediately.

Fortunately only one or two pedicabs have been spotted in Knightsbridge recently but preparations are being made this year to alleviate some of the nuisance behaviour exhibited last summer. A pedicab summit for operators, Councillors and interested parties was held at Westminster City Hall in November where it was decided to go for self regulation. Subsequently the Knightsbridge and Belgravia Ward Councillors designated funds for the control of pedicabs and nuisance cars in Knightsbridge. Christian Ardon from the met has been appointed to control this operation and he will be working with the safer neighbourhood teams around Harrods and in the Sloane Street area. There will be a clamp down on activities such as loud amplified music, parking on pavements and on double yellow lines, taxi ranks and zigzags. They will not be allowed to ride down one way streets and through red lights. It is hoped that these operations will include officers from the UK Borders Agency and traffic police. All teams will continue to check that cars imported for the summer are correctly insured and that they display the correct number plates.

Due to the unrest in the Middle East and North Africa we have police all over Knightsbridge guarding embassies and consulates. However this has not deterred burglars as there have been a small number of opportunist burglaries in this area. The police say they are amazed that owners of such high value properties sometimes have very inexpensive and inadequate locks on their front doors which can easily be slipped. These opportunists do not appear to be deterred by the fact that the house is occupied at the time by humans or even canines so please review your security on windows and doors and make sure that your front door is double locked when you leave the house.

FOR YOUR DIARY - 50th ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

22nd Sep – Tour and lunch at Hyde Park Barracks –
Application Form enclosed.

13th Dec AGM and 50th Anniversary Celebration
Concert Hall, Royal College of Music.

Other Events

11-12 June Open Garden Squares. Tickets and information at www.opensquares.org.

When the KA was founded in 1961 the world really was a very different place. With no broadband or email work was much less of a rat race; there was little expectation that women should work outside of the home and there was a genuine feeling of camaraderie in neighbourhoods. Things have changed just a little bit. Looking ahead to the next fifty years from 2011, it will be increasingly difficult to expect people to give large chunks of time to their community, particularly when so many of our neighbours these days are only part-time residents of Knightsbridge.

Nobody admits to having a lot of spare time. Most are working full time and earning a living, too busy to do anything that does not benefit their bottom line. But if the value of your house goes down because Knightsbridge ceases to be the truly delightful area that it is, you are going to lose money. The Harvard Business School famously teaches its students that there are only three important principles in property: location, location and location. And therein lies, if one were needed, the cold hearted business case for getting involved in the KA. However lovely your own home is, with extensions, basement pools, leather flooring, and what have you, if the house next door is a squat, or the rubbish is piling up at the end of your street or the nightclub on the other side of your garden is keeping everyone awake at night, then the value of your home is definitely going to go down. The KA has worked tirelessly for fifty years to try to keep Knightsbridge THE London location that it is. So please, help. There are very few other ways in which you can have a direct impact on the value of what for most of us is our biggest financial investment.

If you want to help but really do not have the time, we understand – write a cheque instead. For every role that we can't fill with an able volunteer, we have to pay someone a commercial rate to get the job done. A donation over and above your annual membership will go towards chipping away at that annual £7,000 deficit. Or recruit new members - refer a friend or local shopkeeper, or knock on the doors of your nearest neighbours and get them to join. Because it is you, the members that have the most to gain from the work that the KA does, who are best placed to be the Association's ambassadors.

I greatly look forward to hearing from each of you.

Yoshi Nishio

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