



THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

March 2011

Dear Member

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter in this 50th year of The Association. I write as your newly elected Chairman, hoping to make up with enthusiasm the wisdom and gravitas brought to the post by my excellent predecessor Winston Fletcher CBE. As you know, under his leadership, we fought and won a landmark ruling against the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in the matter of Mamounia's opening hours. The date to appeal has now passed, so this is a *bona fide* victory for the Association and its beliefs.

However, it is my view as Chairman that the KA should be supported not just for the high-profile wars we fight under the public spotlight, but for the myriad little fires that the Executive Committee, the sub-committees and their members put out before they flare up. These are the unheralded but real achievements that continue to make Knightsbridge not only a global destination but a pleasant place for all of us to live and work. This is why the KA exists.

PLANNING AND CONSERVATION

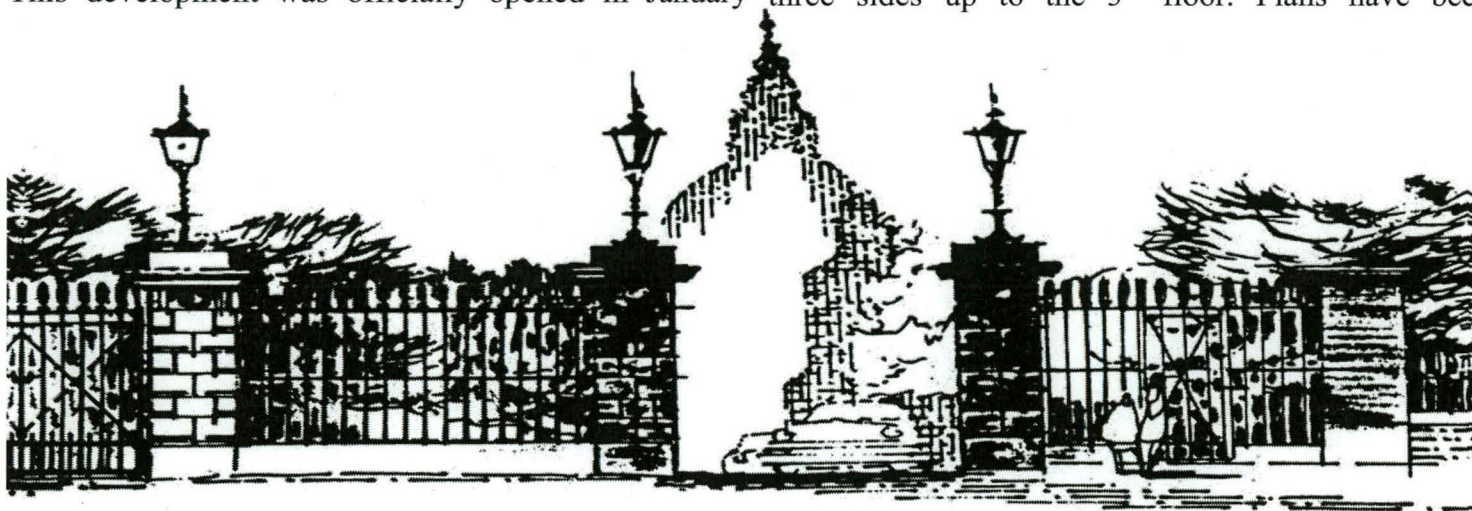
One Hyde Park

This development was officially opened in January

although fitting out the flats is continuing. The new Tube entrance on the north side of Knightsbridge is now open and the retail units will be open for business in the spring. This building's public art includes a system of subtle lighting, designed by James Turrell, which will colour wash the underside of the Edinburgh Gate canopy and the lift cores. It is proposed that the colour will change over a period of 28 days but has not been finally approved by Westminster City Council (WCC). So far the KA has not been impressed by what we have seen of the scheme. The latest reports suggest that 60% by sq meter of the building has been sold to date. Edinburgh Gate opened at the end of November and the traffic problem, a welcome consequence associated with the end of the building works, (see under Transport and Environment) has now eased.

The Knightsbridge Palace Hotel

The topping out ceremony took place in February and the 6 levels of basement excavations have now been completed. Fitting out the guest bedrooms and bathrooms between 1st - 5th floors has already begun and the external Portland stone cladding is now on three sides up to the 3rd floor. Plans have been



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.

submitted to WCC for their public art proposal. This is for decorative open bronze metal work panels to enclose the tables and chairs along their terrace on the Knightsbridge Green frontage. The developers are hopeful that this building will be completed on time.

Kensington Palace Loggia

The Historic Royal Palaces are appealing the two designs for a loggia on the Palace's eastside that were refused by RBKC's planning committee. The KA recognises the need to draw attention to the new entrance to the Palace but we felt that both designs were too ornate and out of keeping for such a plain building. We have written to the Inspector with our comments.

55 – 91 Knightsbridge

The proposed plans for the major redevelopment of this site went to full planning committee last November. The Committee's decision was to grant conditional permission subject to the developers making changes to the service entrance at the rear of the building. However, residents from Kinnerton Street are concerned and have objected to the plans as they felt it would generate extra traffic to the rear of the building on an already confined road. Revised drawings are awaited.

24-26 Brompton Road

Having been refused planning permission by WCC this application is now going to appeal. KA has written to the Inspector in support of WCC's decision to refuse planning permission for change of use to the ground and 1st floors of 24-26 Brompton Road from retail to A3 (restaurant), (to provide enlarged restaurant with no. 22) on the grounds that it would lead to the loss of retail in a Primary Shopping Frontage (WCC UDP adopted Jan 2007). We also pointed out that the triangle bounded by Brompton Road, Knightsbridge, Knightsbridge Green, and in the length of Brompton Road has reached saturation point with an excess of some 40 restaurants/café/eateries.

Subterranean Development

The Association has long held the view that there should be tougher regulations for subterranean developments and that planning permission should not be granted for secondary basements. Following the dramatic road subsidence in Chester Street while a basement was being excavated, the Kings Road Association of Chelsea Residents (KRACR) organised a meeting in the Chelsea Town Hall on basement developments. This well attended meeting by local residents, Councillors and Council Officials from both WCC and RBKC came to the conclusion that basement developments needed to take more responsibility for their conduct. The KA supports KRACR in their drive for a more considerable

building code, tougher enforcement of building conditions, legal action against developers who cause damage and intolerable conditions for neighbours, and alterations to legislation to bring all "extreme" developments under proper planning control.

Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens

Comprehensive Spending Review

The budget across The Royal Parks (TRP) is being cut by 36% and this will inevitably affect standards. In 2009 the budget was £18.8 million; by 2014 it will be £14 million. Total expenditure across TRP has to be cut and they are looking at ways of fundraising to help cover the shortfall, including more events.

Royal Wedding.

The wedding takes place on Friday, 29th April, which has been declared a public holiday. Large screens will be placed in Hyde Park for people to be able to watch the ceremony.

Events, March to July – look out for road closures.

TRP has published the timetable of summer events to be held in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. Some of the events are provisional and have yet to be confirmed.

26 March TUC March and Rally, Parade Ground, Hyde Park

14-15 May Moonwalk, Parade Ground, Hyde Park

21-28 May UEFA Champions League Experience, Parade Ground, Hyde Park.

8-15 June Art Antiques London, West Albert Lawn, Kensington Gardens

The 2012 Olympics

Hyde Park will be hosting the Triathlon and the Marathon Swimming, the two planned events for the 2012 Olympics. These two events are being tested in August to make sure they run smoothly next year. TRP are also working with the GLA over plans for a Festival Live Site based in Hyde Park throughout the Olympic Games, providing Games coverage as well as cultural programmes. For more information: www.royalparks.org.uk/London2012.

Serpentine Sackler Gallery

Plans for the proposed art gallery in The Magazine, Kensington Gardens, to be named The Serpentine Sackler Gallery, have been submitted to WCC Planning Dept. This attractive building was originally a munitions dump but for the past 60 years, it was used by the Park's gardeners to house their equipment, has been neglected. An exhibition of the plans and model to convert it to an art gallery will take place at The Magazine once the details of the application have been finalised

Local Government

Tri-Borough Service Proposals

WCC, RBKC and Hammersmith & Fulham are proposing to amalgamate some of their administration to reduce the cost of bureaucratic overheads. The intention is to cut back office duplication, driving out needless costs, while protecting frontline services and preserving each Council's independence. The initial areas to be combined are adults' and children's services, and functions such as IT. The Councils will be looking to commission other shared services in the future.

Local Development Frameworks (LDF)

Both RBKC and WCC's Core Strategies have been adopted following the public hearings last summer and the Inspectors' published reports. The Core Strategy is the principal document in the LDF and provides the objectives, vision and spatial policies to guide development in the boroughs over the next fifteen years. Both Councils will now be looking at part 2 of the LDF: the Management Plan.

Government

The Localism Bill

The substantial Localism Bill (400 page plus) was published last December. This radical Bill is before Parliament and should it become law there is no doubt it will herald a major change to the way local government operates. The intention is to give local people more say in their communities and powers to challenge their Councils. The Bill includes: The right for voters to call a referendum should Council Tax rise above a certain threshold. The 'Community right to challenge' will allow voluntary, community and certain other groups to take over the running of any service the local authority currently delivers. The 'Community right to buy' will give communities power to save local assets threatened with closure. Under 'Neighbourhood planning' it would allow communities to permit development, either in full or in outline, without the need for planning applications. The bill also includes powers for Local Authorities to be able to grant a discount on business rates. The Mayor for London will be given increased powers including the transfer of the Royal Parks from the Department of Culture Media & Sport. Westminster Amenity Societies Forum, (WASF) is considering a joint action regarding certain aspects of this Bill.

The Census.

The Census will take place on 27th March. It is vital that these forms are completed as Central Government bases its grants to the Local Authorities for the next decade on the results. For the first time the form may be completed either online or by the normal

paper questionnaire. The online version may be completed between 4th March and 6th May. Further details can be obtained from www.2011.census.gov.uk

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Congestion Charge Western Extension

The western extension of the congestion charging zone (WEZ) was removed formally with effect from 4th January 2011. The KA had long campaigned for this 'blunt' instrument to be improved upon not scrapped. After saying it was considering legal action, the Campaign for Clean Air in London received promises from the Mayor of London that, as a result of offsetting measures, air quality will be better in the WEZ area than levels measured in 2010 despite the removal of the WEZ. We are monitoring the situation closely but are sure the real picture will not emerge until Brompton Road, Cromwell Road and the A4 are operating to full capacity i.e. probably after April or May. The current, single lane restrictions west of our area mean that traffic currently 'dribbles' into Knightsbridge and we see artificially low congestion levels.

Edinburgh Gate

At the time of writing, WCC was due to ban the right turn southbound from the new Edinburgh Gate. The KA has pressed for this restriction for some two years since we were warned by One Hyde Park's traffic consultants that – if a new right turn was allowed when one was not allowed in Edinburgh Gate's original position – it would increase rat running through residential streets to the south west. Right turning traffic has added to pressure on that immediate section of road during the construction of the Knightsbridge Palace Hotel. The right turn ban is currently only promised until November or so when the Knightsbridge Palace Hotel works are due to start scaling down. Our Councillors are being very helpful and we are due to discuss with them and WCC officers in coming months in a holistic way: the impact of Edinburgh Gate; the location of the bus stop outside Park Mansions; the possibility of a traffic box covering the eastbound lane in Knightsbridge in front of Edinburgh Gate; the long promised right turn at Scotch Corner from Knightsbridge eastbound into Brompton Road; and the impact of the WEZ removal and the changes at Exhibition Road on all the above.

Exhibition Road Project

The works at Exhibition Road seem to be progressing. We are very concerned though about suggestions the road may be used as an 'event space' and closed for extensive periods. Apart from the immediate impact on residents, this would result in the displacement of traffic to many local roads. We are meeting RBKC to highlight these concerns.

LAW & ORDER

Policing in the 21st Century is constantly changing and the police face varying challenges on a daily basis. In addition to the demands of general response and neighbourhood policing London is a key centre of attention for both terrorism and vice.

Demonstrations

Recent demonstrations and protests are placing a financial strain on budgets. Although the police have access to extra types of funding in Central London, demonstrations are a considerable expense as they can be organised very quickly through the internet, and the police have to be prepared to deal with large numbers of demonstrators, sometimes at very short notice.

Car Crimes

Professional criminals are stealing to order and recent surveys have shown that cars are more likely to be broken into or stolen from exclusive postcodes than less charming parts of town. Leave nothing on show. Someone may be prepared to smash your side window for 50p left on the back seat. Do not leave your car keys anywhere near the front door at night. Thieves now have the technology to detect if computers are left inside the boot of vehicles.

Review your Security

Our police teams have done an extensive amount of work to reduce pick pocketing and theft from shops and the latest statistics for the year show a significant reduction. However, burglary figures are increasing and both residents and businesses should regularly review their security arrangements. It's not like the movies, most burglars are not sophisticated and in 99 percent of cases gain entry through an open window or unlocked door. Always use your deadlock and double lock your doors. If you have a burglar alarm, switch it on when you leave the premises, and at night. For advice from a Police Officer on your personal and home security call 020 7321 6890 ask for PC Lewis (Knightsbridge and Belgravia Team) or for the Brompton Team (RBKC residents) PC Mark Magee can be reached on 020 7161 8982.

The Real Story

An article in the Evening Standard on Friday 25th February 2011 described the area of Knightsbridge as having seen a sharp rise in robberies and burglaries in recent months. The article stated that there were 31 robberies and 44 burglaries in December in the area around Harrods.

Police records in RBKC's Brompton Ward indicate that in the past 12 weeks there has actually been 1 personal robbery and 3 residential burglaries within a 400 metre radius of Harrods. **In the Westminster section of Knightsbridge there were two burglaries in December, one of which was near the Royal Albert Hall and the other (non residential) in The Brompton Road. This committee work closely with the police and you can be reassured as to the rates of crime in our area which still remains one of the safest parts of London.**

WAYS TO CONTACT THE POLICE

EMERGENCY – 999

NON-EMERGENCY 0300 123 1212

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

50th ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

9th February Climate Change Lecture Some 100 people enjoyed an excellent reception and talk at Imperial College by Professor Sir Brian Hoskins.

12th May House of Lords Dinner – details and application form attached. There has been strong interest in this event so please book early to avoid disappointment.

September Event work in progress

13th December AGM Concert Hall, Royal College of Music

Looking ahead, the Association is well placed to move confidently into the future. We mark our 50th anniversary with around 1,000 members - a good starting point, I think you'll agree. But we always welcome new members and more involvement from existing ones. Please do get in touch with me personally (Chairman@knightsbridgeassociation.org) if you would like to do more or know of residents who would like to join.

You will notice some changes. We will shortly relaunch our website. It will be easy to use and full of interesting and helpful things: updates about current campaigns, details of social events, contact numbers, etc. Subscriptions will rise (but for the first time this millennium!). A new standing order form is enclosed: boring administration, but as we are changing banks, please do return the completed forms as soon as possible. Carol Seymour-Newton, who has truly been the backbone as well as the unparalleled public face of the Association, will be devoting most of her time henceforth to Planning and Conservation, and will be handing over the administrative duties. We hope to appoint a membership secretary. We will be reaching out to younger residents and those not yet represented in our ranks with an even more varied social programme. I am delighted to say that legendary Oscar winning film producer David (now Lord) Puttnam has agreed to speak to us after dinner at the House of Lords in May.

These will be evolutionary tweaks rather than whole-scale change: the method of delivery may be different - a bit more up-to-date, a bit less formal - but the work we do, and our commitment to the Association's core values, will remain very much the same.

I greatly look forward to serving you.

Yoshi Nishio

Yoshi Nishio
Chairman