



THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

**AUTUMN 2014
NEWSLETTER**

Dear Member,

I do hope you have all enjoyed the superb summer. Although it now seems like a long time ago, July was one of the warmest and driest on record, and when the weather gods are smiling on us London is unbeatable as a city and Knightsbridge really does feel like 'the world's best village'.

But that is not to say that we are without problems. Far from it, as you will read below, we have been as busy as ever trying to keep a lid on some of the worst excesses. We were particularly disappointed to learn that following the licensing hearing in May (see Newsletters passim) when they were rightly refused permission to extend their opening hours to 2AM

every morning, McDonalds in Brompton Road have decided to mount a legal challenge appealing the Council's decision. As I wrote in a previous edition of this publication, the general feeling was that McDonald's is an honorable operator and that they mostly make an effort to take into consideration the concerns of their neighbours. Sadly this latest development calls into question their entire sense of social responsibility, and suggests that perhaps, they are just in it for the money after all.

A particularly distasteful aspect of this saga is that McDonald's have since also applied for a series of Temporary Event Notices over the past few weeks, enabling them to open

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until 2AM on specified nights. No doubt the appeal committee will be told in great detail how on these temporary late night openings, no residents complained. Now I am just thinking aloud here but I wonder if the month of August in a major well- to-do city where many residents are away is the best time to gauge these neighbours' true opinions?

We are all too aware of the steady deterioration of Brompton Road into a giant teeming tourists' mecca. The KA will continue to do everything it can to preserve the amenity of the area for its members and visitors alike, but we need your help. The appeal hearings are set for 25, 26 and 27 November at Westminster Magistrates' Court. Please do attend and add your voice to ours. If the original decision against the extension of opening hours is overturned, we may pass the point of no return

On a more cheerful note, we are all greatly looking forward to seeing many of you at our Annual Gala Dinner. This year we will be gathering at Knightsbridge institution Searcy's in Pavilion Road to welcome as our distinguished guest the Queen's official representative in London, The Lord Lieutenant of Greater London, Sir David Brewer CMG JP. The dinner will be held on Wednesday 17 September. If you would like one of the last remaining tickets, please immediately get in touch with carol.seymour-newton@knightsbridgeassociation.com or ring Carol on 020 7823 9103

PLANNING AND CONSERVATION

55-91 Knightsbridge and 1-3 William Street

Planning permission was given for the redevelopment of this significant stretch of Knightsbridge

in 2010 and construction is due to begin in the latter part of next year. Members will recall that the Edwardian façade is to be retained, whilst the rest of the building will be demolished and replaced with shops on the ground floor with offices and residential above. In the 1980s, the KA was instrumental in getting the building spotlisted to save the façade -- such an important feature of Knightsbridge -- from possible destruction. By October / November this year most of the upper floors should be vacant and by February 2015 the whole block will be vacant and 'investigation' works should start. Demolition work should begin in or around Summer 2015 and completion is targeted for the first quarter of 2018. The plan is to demolish 1-3 William Street to provide access to the rear of the site for construction traffic: this is likely to cause some problems for Lowndes Square. A community liaison group was formed during

pre-planning and submission of the planning application so that local concerns could be voiced and dealt with as they arose. We understand from owners, Cheval Property, that this group will be reconvened when works begin.

34/35 Brompton Square

Planning permission was granted by RBKC to convert these two houses into four luxury flats by building an extra mansard storey and rear extensions, excavating and installing a carport in the rear garden with access to Ennismore Street. As one redevelopment in this short, narrow street nears completion, life will again be disrupted since most of the construction traffic will access from the street as access via Brompton Square is virtually impossible. It only remains for work to restart on 31 Brompton Square (the 30 ft. hole alongside Ennismore Gardens Mews) and there will be gridlock. No wonder

developers are so unpopular with local residents!

31 Egerton Gardens

The KA supported the objections of members at No 31 to a planning application to convert the house from five flats to a single dwelling, as this would entail a considerable loss of residential units. This would be contrary to RBKC policy and permission was refused. The KA is concerned at the continuing loss of smaller and medium sized units detracting from the diversity of properties available. Number 31 has some significant heritage assets, many of which would have been lost in the proposed development, and the residents (again supported by the KA) with the help of Ettwein Bridges, architects known for their work on the conservation of historic buildings, put in a report to English Heritage applying for Listed Building designation. We wait to hear the result.

THE PARKS

Plans have been drawn up for providing better facilities around Queen Anne's Alcove and the Italian Gardens in the area close to Marlborough Gate to the north of Kensington Gardens, which will include converting an existing timber kiosk and former children's toilet to a new catering facility with internal and external seating. While these improvements are welcome, we have always called for work to the drainage scheme as you cross into the Park at Prince of Wales Gate: flooding occurs every time there is a heavy shower. Similarly the football ground, which is badly compacted and covered in depressions, also fills with water whenever it rains.

Events in Hyde Park Last summer the organisers of the Barclaycard British Summer Time Concerts installed acoustic meters – for measuring noise levels – on top of the Grosvenor House Hotel,

the cinema in Edgware Road and in Lancaster Gate. None were located in the Knightsbridge area because, the organisers explained, the stage faced north west and with the prevailing wind being from the south west, the Knightsbridge side would not be affected. They stated that the acoustic meters positioned outside the perimeter of the park should not surpass 75 decibels (basically the level of someone speaking loudly). As last year, WCC did have their own monitoring in place which included Upper Brook Street and the Odeon cinema in Marble Arch, both at roof level. Jessica Chambers at the Royal Parks says the sound levels were continuously monitored onsite and offsite throughout the concerts to ensure compliance with the licence conditions. The stage position was the same as in 2013.

The KA will request acoustic meters be placed in the Knightsbridge area during

future concerts. This would ensure that there are accurate acoustic measurements for residents south of the Park. There are a number of suitable locations from which to choose – Parkside, the Mandarin Oriental and Kingston House.

BBC Proms in the Park

Saturday 13 September -The Last night of the Proms will be broadcast in the Park as in previous years and will end around 10.30pm.

Sunday 14 September – Radio 2 Live in Hyde Park. Doors open at 11.30am, the concert ends at 9.00pm.

Residents who find the noise intolerable should get in touch with the Royal Parks directly so that they can respond immediately and track where problems areas are. Complaints must be made **as the noise is occurring**. By telephone, freephone **0800 567 7079** or email **eventfeedback@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk**.

Winter Wonderland will again take place during the Christmas and New Year season.

WCC and RBKC LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Both Councils are continuing the process of reviewing their Core Strategy. A planning inspector is currently carrying out an Examination in Public to see if RBKC's planning policies on Basements and Conservation Design proposed in the Partial Review of their Core Strategy are legally sound. He has sent a series of preliminary questions to the Council and hearings for the Examination are scheduled to take place in September. WCC's SPD on basements has not yet been formally adopted.

RBKC SPD on The Royal Brompton Hospital Fulham site

Consultation on the draft Supplementary Planning Document closed on 30 April. The results

were considered at a full Council Meeting in July, attended by a large number of local residents many of whom had expressed concern that the document did not include an option for continued use of the Fulham Road wing as a health facility. This would enable The Royal Marsden Hospital to pursue their aim to obtain the Fulham Road wing, sandwiched between their hospital and the Institute for Cancer Research, for further research facilities, clinical trials and patient care. It is anticipated that the second version of the SPD will be released in the autumn and hoped that the option for continued medical use will be included.

LICENSING

La Rosa, 36 Knightsbridge: KA attended and gave oral evidence at the WCC Licensing Committee hearing which took place on 24 July. The KA and

Parkside Residents Associations' objections were upheld by the committee and the Application was granted subject to late night refreshment being confined to Core Hours and further conditions relating to litter prevention, commercial waste collections, noise, CCTV monitoring and the sale of hot food and drinks.

Hawksmoor, 3 Yeoman's Row:

KA objected to the Application which proposed an extra hour later each night in conjunction with the removal of a number of conditions included in the existing license. KA argued that the Application undermined Licensing Objectives 1 and 3 (prevention of crime and disorder and prevention of public nuisance); and that the civic culture of Brompton Road and environs is '**retail and residential**' not '**late night entertainment**'. We pointed out that RBKC's past failure to respect this distinction has prioritised commercial interests over those of residents in contravention of the Council's own Licensing Policy. KA's

objections were upheld in large measure in a complex ruling which refused, *inter alia*, to grant an extension of permitted hours and restricted opening hours to 10.00 to 23.30 Sunday to Thursday and 10.00 to 00.30 Friday and Saturday.

Polish Hearth Club: No developments of note since the last update in KA's May newsletter. The Appeal hearing date has been scheduled for 4th, 5th and 8th September at Westminster Magistrates' Court commencing at 10.00am. KA will be attending and parties affected by the Application are urged to attend and give evidence.

McDonalds: As noted above, we have been notified that McDonald's will appeal RBKC Licensing Committee's earlier ruling. The appeal hearing will take place at Westminster Magistrates' Court over 25th to 27th November. The KA has submitted formal written evidence to the Hearing reiterating our concerns and supporting RBKC's original

decision. KA's principal grounds for objection were that the Application, if successful, would exacerbate the already serious problems related to this outlet, namely: draw even more crowds into the area; attract transient, late night customers in cars into the Montpeliers, Beaufort Gardens and neighbouring streets; result in more late night and early morning HGV deliveries creating noise and disturbance; create more rubbish in Brompton Road; and set a precedent for a late night entertainment culture in the Brompton Road.

LAW AND ORDER

Demonstrations

The summer in Knightsbridge was overshadowed by a number of demonstrations which caused considerable nuisance for our residents and visitors. Knightsbridge was affected as campaigners passed through on their way to the Israeli Embassy in Kensington. Many of the surrounding streets were closed off and the traffic was diverted.

There was a massive police deployment on those days as officers were brought in from all over London, and as these demonstrations always seem to occur at weekends the overtime bill was enormous. Brompton Road was also closed off for various events and residents have complained that this summer it was all just a bit too much.

The London Policing Model

The Law and Order Committee of the Knightsbridge Association acts as a line of communication between Westminster and RBKC councils and the Metropolitan Police and although we do our best to support the police in what we know are extremely challenging times sometimes it is difficult. The new London Policing Model, which has been introduced across London, is unsuitable for Knightsbridge. The Safer Neighbourhood Teams have more or less been disbanded and although the 101 non-emergency number is very effective, we have lost the community policing system which worked extremely well in

our area. We hope that the powers that be in the Met will reconsider and return to the system that wasn't broke and didn't need fixing.

Beggars

Knightsbridge has become a magnet for beggars from all over Eastern Europe. There is now a beggar outside most of the coffee shops and restaurants, as well as banks and stations. The police try to move them on but many now have National Insurance cards and EU documentation and it's not illegal to sit on the pavement unless they are begging with a cup. All sorts of scams are taking place on Brompton Road. Residents are advised to take care.

Anti-Social Behaviour

The promenading crowds of young Middle Eastern visitors were particularly attracted to Knightsbridge this summer when Chapati & Karak, a new café established in and owned by the government of Qatar, opened in the premises formerly occupied by Café

Montpeliano on the raised pavement section of the Brompton Road. Serving take away tea and arabic breads the popularity of this small shop caused chaos and nuisance out on the street necessitating attention from both RBKC and the police. The crowds outside in the evenings completely blocked the pavement making it not only impassable but dangerous. Rubbish was thrown everywhere and even local shopowners complained that the situation was unbearable. Both councils stepped up to the mark and extra bins and street cleaning were swiftly provided in the vicinity of the offending premises.

Police continued to warn supercar drivers to act considerately, but this year their cars appeared to be more colourful and even more numerous than in past years. Showing off their cars or drag racing through Knightsbridge has become the regular summer sport of choice for young Middle Eastern men from the Gulf States but

fortunately most have realised now that they must have valid insurance and many have even registered a car or two in the UK if they own homes here.

TERRORIST THREAT

The threat level to the UK from international terrorism has been raised to **SEVERE**, an attack is highly likely. This is related to the developments in Syria and Iraq where groups are planning an attack in the UK, not to specific communities.

UK policing has a variety of operational tactics that are regularly used to prepare and protect the public. People can expect to see an increase in high visibility police activity around a variety of sites, sectors and communities. Communities defeat terrorism and the public are urged to report suspicious activity.

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Phasing of lights at top of Exhibition Road

Westminster City Council has re-phased the lights at the top

of Exhibition Road at the entrance to Hyde Park to reduce delays particularly southbound through the Park. We'll continue to monitor the situation.

Ride London

Ride London was responsible for managing their summer cycling event. They say the closure of Exhibition Road during the Ride London event was unplanned. We understand Exhibition Road was a 'soft closure' point to facilitate the event with hard closures for the course itself. Stewards should have been allocated at each closure point but they appear to have been under-resourced or worse on the day. The role of stewards is to allow through those who need and are entitled to access an area. Ride London (and WCC) are aware of the problems that arose this time and we hope they will be avoided in future.

Drains

The drains you see along the kerb are 'Surface water gullies' and in Westminster they feed

into the Thames Water sewer system several metres below the surface of the road. We have been assured WCC's service standard is still to respond within two hours for flooding to properties where it is caused by a blocked gully and within 28 days for non-priority reports. Pouring anything down the street drain is illegal and causes thousands of pounds of damage to their network each year. Indeed, we have been told WCC would seek to prosecute this activity wherever they have evidence to support action. They don't pump out gullies but 'clean and jet' them. Westminster does not have drains in the middle of the road. The management of RBKC drain assets may be similar or different.

ELECTION RESULTS

European There are eight MEPs for London Region and at the May elections the following were elected: Syed Kamall (CON), Dr. Charles Tannock (CON), Jean Lambert (GRN), Charles Moraes (LAB),

Mary Honeyball (LAB), Lucy Anderson (LAB), Seb Dance (LAB) and Gerard Batten (UKIP).

Local Philippa Roe, also leader of the Council, Tony Devenish and Rachael Robathan were re-elected to represent Knightsbridge and Belgravia Ward of the City of Westminster. In Kensington and Chelsea, ward boundaries were changed: Brompton Ward disappeared and most of the area covered by the KA went into the newly designated Hans Town and Brompton. Nick Paget-Brown, also Leader of RBKC, Tim Coleridge and Mary Weale are the councillors.

KA NEWS

Evening at Bonhams 9 June Members were fortunate in being able to kick off the summer with a very pleasant evening at Bonhams with a glass of wine while perusing a private view of their sale of 19th Century European, Victorian and British Impressionist Art. It was good to see many familiar faces as well as new

neighbours who were interested in joining the Association. Our grateful thanks to Jon Baddeley, Managing Director of Bonhams Knightsbridge, for making the evening possible.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

KA Annual Gala Dinner Wednesday 17 September: Our annual black tie dinner for members takes place at Searcy's in Pavilion Road. Our guest of honour is The Lord Lieutenant of Greater London, Sir David Brewer CMG JP. Very few tickets are left – if you would like to attend please apply immediately to carol.seymour-newton@knightsbridgeassociation.com or ring Carol on 020 7823 9103.

Knightsbridge/Belgravia Ward Councillors Surgery Tuesday 4 November: The second ward surgery of the year will take place at the Bulgari Hotel, from 6.30pm to 8.00pm and will give Westminster residents the chance to talk to their councillors about local issues.

We look forward to seeing you there.

53rd Annual General Meeting Tuesday 9 December at The Science Museum – full details will be circulated nearer the time. We are very pleased that as fellow members of the local community The Science Museum have generously agreed to host our AGM in one of their galleries – it will be a very special and interesting location this year.

Eaton Square Concerts supported by KA members, the Friends of Music at St. Peter's Eaton Square, and who themselves are members of the KA, have published details of their five Autumn concerts on www.eatonsquareconcerts.org.uk These take place weekly and in October and November, the first being on Thursday 9th October.

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