



THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2015 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member

The onset of warmer weather inevitably draws our attention to the annual influx of overseas visitors to our corner of London. With each passing year, what began as a summertime trend of people swapping the sweltering temperatures back home for the comfort of Knightsbridge has become a year-round phenomenon. While we welcome everyone with open arms and the majority are pleasant and civilized contributors to the diversity and economy of our area, there has been a marked increase in anti-social behaviour by a small but disproportionately noticeable minority.

The growing scourges of supercars being driven dangerously and large groups of homeless people congregating for organized begging make the shisha cafés and pedicabs

that we have written so much about previously seem like quaint little nuisances of yesteryear. Meanwhile in the residential quarters, basement excavations continue largely unabated and online agencies of one hue or another have made short term, holiday lets the norm in some mansion blocks, with the attendant problems of noise and lack of care that often accompanies transient tenants.

But all is by no means lost. As I write, new groups of residents are organizing themselves, sending out leaflets and lobbying councils, the police and other authorities like never before. While the KA, as one of the leading amenity societies in London, will continue to take a long term, measured approach to solving these

Vice-President: The Lady Grade

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

Treasurer: Olivia J Cox

www.knightsbridgeassociation.com

problems, we are nonetheless cheered by this new level of community engagement.

Perhaps the most concrete sign of this new direction is the - fingers crossed - soon to be designated Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (KNF). In our Spring newsletter, I mentioned that we were taking the lead with this important piece of national government policy by helping to establish a Neighbourhood Forum here in Knightsbridge. A cornerstone of the Localism Bill of 2011, all neighbourhoods now have the right first to define officially the boundaries of their district and then to convene a Forum within that area, following approval by their local authority. Westminster City Council (WCC) accepted our application and launched the statutory six-week representation period which closed on 15 May. We are now awaiting a decision from WCC. The signs are positive.

Once approved, the KNF will have a five year exclusive mandate to develop an official Neighbourhood Plan. We were keen to be the

catalyst for this process and decided to support the establishment of the Forum as a separate legal body rather than apply ourselves for Forum status. At least half the board of the proposed new entity will be local residents with the Chair always being taken by a resident. Local institutions and businesses are also represented on the Forum board.

To be clear, the KNF is not expected to compete with the KA. Rather, by crafting the Neighbourhood Plan, it will harness the powers of Forum legislation to improve Knightsbridge by consulting on, amongst other things, ways to: protect, preserve and enhance its unique character; make the area more sustainable; have a well-planned and maintained public realm which responds well to the high volumes of workers, visitors and residents; support efforts to reduce crime and disorder and prevent public nuisance; enhance its economic performance for local businesses and suitability for local institutions; improve quality of life

for residents; and support measures which improve air quality and reduce noise nuisance. In short, the KNF makes the rules; the KA will continue to ensure that the rules are followed.

This initiative is a genuine game-changer in the world of local policy, and the KA supports it fully. Can I ask you all to thank Simon Birkett, long-time KA officer, for taking charge of this important and complex process and agreeing to take up the position of Founding Chairman? All residents and individuals from local business and institutions can apply to become members of the KNF once it is established. We will publish details when confirmed.

I wish you all a splendid summer.

PLANNING & CONSERVATION REPORT

**Edward Davies-Gilbert and
Carol Seymour-Newton**

WCC digitisation by default - The Future is digital

As part of WCC's cost cutting drive the Planning Department is going paperless. WCC announced in April that later this year they will no longer be preparing

hardcopy plans and supporting information for amenity groups as 85% of all applications they receive are submitted digitally via their planning portal. In short this means that the KA, together with other amenity groups, will need to invest in larger screens and printers as on a screen, many plans are difficult to read and compare the present layout with the proposed plans. We are asking WCC for help with the funding of these items to ensure a smooth transition to the digital age.

Basements

Whereas RBKC's new regulations limiting basement excavations have now been adopted, WCC are way behind, so we can expect a flood of applications before their's are adopted, most probably by year end. For members potentially affected by excavations, look carefully at the Construction Transport Management Plan (CTMP), and get hold of a copy of any conditions attached to the planning permission - often these are not complied with. Any breaches should be reported to the Council's enforcement officer, letheringtonsmith@westminster.gov.uk. Appoint an independent surveyor and ask for the developer to put a sum of money in escrow to

cover any damage to your property. It is not unknown for a developer to vanish when time comes for paying your surveyor and any damage incurred.

The Barracks

Pending the election outcome the future of the barracks had been put on hold. It is now expected that the MoD will again be marketing the site. Plans are for a potential £1billion sale and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (the body which manages MoD property) has held initial discussions with a handful of developers, two of which, Lipton Rogers and Cheval Property Group, have already made contact with the KA. The attempt to sell the site in 2012 for around £600million was unsuccessful, but the increase in residential property prices since then means that a redevelopment including relocation of the barracks might now be viable. We live in fear of another mega development aimed at billionaire overseas buyers that will remain largely unoccupied. There has been a barracks on the site since the late 18th century. Knightsbridge without the Household Cavalry would no longer be the Knightsbridge we all know and love.

Natural History Museum

Following the competition launched last year by Malcolm Reading to redevelop the grounds, the winning partnership of Niall McLaughlin Architects and landscape designer Kim Wilkie have been working on plans that extend the museum's interior experience to the gardens. Although the plans are at an early stage it is envisaged that redevelopment will consist of three areas: Civic Square, at the corner of Cromwell and Exhibition Roads, will provide an area for visitors to sit and relax; Eastern Grounds will allow visitors to examine the past history of life on Earth with a recast of Dippy the dinosaur as its centerpiece; and Western Grounds exploring four topics (water, vegetation, climate and animal life) will show how the wellbeing of humans and wildlife is interdependent. We look forward to seeing the plans in more detail as they develop.

Royal College of Music

In April they announced a £25m project transforming the interior of their handsome Victorian building and opening it up to the public with new performance halls and a café. The masterplan by John Simpson Architects addresses the problems

caused by piecemeal additions from the 1960s and 70s, and is centred on a new external Quad at ground level, accessed from an enlarged Entrance Hall and a new triple-height foyer. Additional floor space includes two new multi-functional performance venues, a new home for the Museum of Music, new communal spaces for audiences with café bar and restaurant facilities as well as a new digital recording studio and additional practice and teaching rooms. The Prince of Wales, as President of the RCM has agreed to be Patron of the RCM's More Music campaign to fund the £25m redevelopment, and it is hoped the two year building programme could commence as early as 2016. The College will continue to function during this time.

Imperial College has acquired the old Post Office building in Exhibition Road from the Science Museum. It will house the Dyson School of Design Engineering, launched in March by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne and inventor Sir James Dyson. The School has been established with a £12m donation from the James Dyson Foundation and will begin teaching in October 2015, using Imperial's existing

facilities. The converted Post Office will be ready to take an increased number of students by October 2017. The KA wholeheartedly commends the James Dyson Foundation for its generosity enabling the preservation of this important landmark.

The Royal Albert Hall Masterplan

Published in 2010, this identified a number of 'priority projects'. In May, after local consultation, they lodged an application to excavate two basement levels on the southwest corner. This would allow the creation of much needed extra facilities for artists and the rationalization of existing accommodation within the hall to release areas within the building for alternative use; facilitate enhanced public access, and provide new plant and storage space. Subject to permission being granted, enabling works would start in early 2016, the main construction in October 2016 and completion would be in March 2018, although the external works would be completed some time before then. A spokesman for the Hall tells us that there are encouraging signs of the scheme being fully funded but 'any

donations would be gratefully received!’

Albertopolis - Improvements to the Public Realm

The scheme to improve the space and ‘connectivity’ between the Hall and the Albert Memorial, championed by the Royal Commission for the 1851 Exhibition, is being slowly progressed and an update is expected in the coming months. Meanwhile funding for the £18m scheme is being sought. Amongst the much needed improvements will be step-free access to the Park.

V&A Museum Exhibition Road Courtyard

As reported in the Spring newsletter, work is proceeding apace. Excavation should be completed by early autumn. Trucks will remove 22,500 cubic metres of earth, most of which will go to land recycling facilities. Vehicles will follow the detailed traffic management plan to help mitigate any traffic or safety issues. Construction will continue through 2016 and the new Courtyard will open to the public in early 2017. There is a public display located in Gallery 20 featuring visuals, models and mock ups of the Project.

158-166 Brompton Road

Work has at last begun on the stripping out of this 60s building. The frame will be retained but the Cheval Place side replaced. Simon Birkett has been liaising with RBKC officers to see that the CTMP mitigates the disruption to those living and working in Cheval Place, but it will inevitably be pretty grim.

The Royal Parks

The KA attends regular stakeholder meetings in the Park to discuss forthcoming events and to give and receive feedback on previous events. There are also regular meetings to discuss plans for planting, maintenance etc. There was some irritation when it was proposed to introduce charging for use of the football pitches. A compromise has now been reached whereby charges are only levied for commercial groups (those who actually charge their own teams for organizing games).

Events - Full details of events can be found at royalparks.org.uk/events

Road closures – Notification will be provided on Park notice boards and road signs will go up several weeks in advance.

Noise - The number of registered complaints during last year's summer concerts dropped to six. The designated noise telephone number for all events throughout the year is 0800 567 7079. WCC's noise number is 020 7641 2000. **It is essential to phone at the time that noise is occurring, so that it can be logged and investigated.**

TRANSPORT AND **ENVIRONMENT REPORT** **Simon Birkett**

Redevelopment of 55-91 Knightsbridge and 1-3 William Street

We have joined the Community Liaison Group for the massive redevelopment of 55-91 Knightsbridge, which is the block between the Park Tower and Berkeley Hotels on the south side of Knightsbridge. The development will involve: restoration and cleaning of the façades; restoration of the Knightsbridge shop fronts to their original design; and modern servicing and improved construction techniques to improve the acoustic and environmental performance of the building. It is designed to be a flexible space for use by large or small retailers. Considerable disruption is expected

through Lowndes Square and William Street with the occasional partial closure of Knightsbridge westbound with the first of these being for two days this Autumn. TfL and the developer will keep us informed. The projected completion date is June 2018.

London Underground 24 hour running

From the early hours of Saturday 12 September, Londoners and visitors to the capital will be able to travel on the Jubilee, Victoria and most of the Piccadilly, Central and Northern Tube lines all night on Fridays and Saturdays. On the Piccadilly line there will be a service between Cockfosters and Heathrow Terminal 5 (no service on the Terminal 4 loop, or between Acton Town and Uxbridge via Rayners Lane). TfL hopes to expand across other lines in subsequent years.

Cycle superhighways

Work on the East-West Cycle Superhighway began in April at Hyde Park Corner and along Victoria Embankment and Upper and Lower Thames Street. TfL plans to complete this work by summer 2016. Separate construction phases are planned,

each affecting different sections of the route:

- Hyde Park Corner: April - August 2015 and January - February 2016
- Victoria Embankment: April 2015 - January 2016
- Upper and Lower Thames Street: April 2015 - March 2016
- Tower Hill: July - November 2015

Work will also take place along South Carriage Drive and West Carriage Drive but we don't know dates yet. Locations and dates may change throughout the build. For more information see TfL's East-West travel advice page via www.tfl.gov.uk.

LAW AND ORDER REPORT

Madeline Elsdon

Plans for the Summer Season

The Law and Order Committee continue to prepare, together with councils and police, for the influx of summer tourists. Continuing turmoil in the Middle East has drastically reduced the number of holiday destinations available in the past for residents of the Gulf States who traditionally seek refuge from their extremely hot summers. These visitors now favour Knightsbridge and stimulate our economy by spending their petrodollars in Harrods and other

businesses in the area. They particularly enjoy the ambiance of the large number of cafés in the Brompton Road catering to their tastes. Unfortunately the huge number of visitors sometimes causes inconvenience to local residents but the reported crime statistics still remain extremely low. Although Knightsbridge remains one of the safest places in London, incidents occasionally occur and we must take care when out and about or arriving home and always be aware of our surroundings.

Body Cameras

Last year Knightsbridge participated in a trial of body cameras for police officers. Early indications show that they are a valuable evidential and policing tool. We have been promised that when the cameras are finally rolled out Knightsbridge will be first on the list. The use of these cameras will boost transparency and accelerate convictions as there will be a record of every interaction. This may also help to restore trust in the police in certain communities.

Crime Prevention

There have been significant staffing changes at council level

and the support given to Neighbourhood Watch may suffer. It is important that as many of you as possible join or start a Watch. Even if you become a coordinator responsible for one house, block of flats or a section of a street we could all play a small part and broaden our involvement in protecting our community. The Crime Prevention website (<http://thecrimepreventionwebsite.com>) is the largest and most comprehensive resource for free crime prevention and home security advice. Written by Calvin Beckford, a retired Metropolitan police officer, security consultant and author with many years of crime prevention experience, this website is an excellent resource. The site is currently advertising the only automatic light switch timer to fit over an existing wall light switch, without the need for any wiring. Check it out.

How Safe Do You Feel?

Westminster Council and the local police are trying to get a better understanding of how residents feel about the areas in which they live and identify any concerns they may have. Please help by completing this survey. It shouldn't take any longer than 10 minutes:

www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1993357/Community-Reassurance-Survey

Do forward it on to others that live in our area. If you would like to receive feedback on the survey results or be kept updated on any concerns raised there is an option to leave contact details at the end. You are of course free to complete it anonymously.

Fraud

Remember, if you've been a victim of fraud you can report it online to Action Fraud UK. Fraudsters often target 'goods for sale' adverts on popular online auction sites, so watch out whenever you're selling anything online.

How does it work? The fraudster will contact the seller to say that they want to buy the advertised item. The seller then receives what looks like a genuine PayPal email, to confirm that money has been paid by the buyer into their account. With confirmation of payment, the seller then sends the item to the buyer's address. The seller later finds that the PayPal email is fake and that no money has been paid. The seller ends up losing out twice as not only have they lost money, but they no longer have the item to sell.

Protect yourself;

- Check your PayPal account to ensure that the money has been paid in and has cleared into your bank account before you send the item to the buyer.
- Do not be bullied or rushed into sending items before you know that the payment has cleared – a genuine purchaser will not mind waiting a day or two for you to send them their items.
- If you are selling a vehicle, think carefully when selling to overseas purchasers – especially if they tell you they will send an extra payment for shipping – check that the funds have cleared before arranging this.

Hyde Park Corner Underpasses

The KA has for many years been trying to get improved maintenance and policing of these squalid passages at one of the most iconic places in London. Problems include rough sleeping, anti-social behaviour, litter and general dirt and lack of maintenance. In May, London Underground (LU) organized a meeting to bring all the numerous stakeholders together to seek solutions. The main problem seems to be that there are just too many cooks, with each having

responsibility for isolated sections and no one with overall responsibility. LU, TfL, several departments of WCC, Heritage Wardens, the Met and British Transport Police are all involved to varying degrees, but with no-one co-ordinating or in charge. Don't expect any immediate improvement, but at least everyone is aware of the situation and everyone is talking.

Cross Border Meeting: We have just convened another "Knightsbridge Summit" where councillors, council officers, the police and other interested parties meet from time to time to discuss issues that plague both WCC and RBKC. RBKC are taking a commendably proactive approach to the antisocial behaviour issues and we are delighted to report that they hope to impose on their section of Brompton Road a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). This would make it an offence to drive while making excessive noise, for pedicabs to play loud music and so on. A public consultation begins soon – do please support it.

LICENSING REPORT

Melville Haggard

WCC Licensing Consultation

The consultation closed on 15 May. The KA submitted its response well ahead of the deadline. We await the outcome.

Zuma at 5 Raphael Street

The restaurant sought the continuation of extended opening hours to 00.30 Mondays to Saturdays through removal of condition 2 of the Planning Permission dated 10.12.13. 199 Knightsbridge with support from the KA objected to the application but it was approved by WCC.

13 Exhibition Road

RBKC approved a new premises license for A3 use (restaurant and café).

Jumeirah Lowndes Hotel

The KA sought clarification from Jumeirah regarding their application to increase the capacity of their Terrace to 200 people. The application turned out to be misleading in that it relates only to a specific night of the year namely, Wednesday 24 June when the hotel supports a charity event for the Motcomb Street Party.

In the context of the formation of the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (KNF), see earlier, the KA has contributed factors relating to Licensing that will need to be reflected in the KNF's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

OTHER BUSINESS

GENERAL ELECTION

Our congratulations to Mark Field MP who held the Cities of London and Westminster seat and has been appointed a Privy Councillor, and to Victoria Borwick MP who won Kensington & Chelsea. At the present time Victoria is also a GLA member, an RBKC councillor, and has the distinction of being a female old Etonian!

ANNUAL GENERAL

MEETING Monday 7 December

We are delighted to tell you that the Mandarin Oriental Hotel has generously agreed to let us hold our AGM in their Ballroom overlooking Hyde Park. Details and notices will follow nearer the time.

EVENTS

We hope to hold a casual members' event at the Royal Geographical

Society's Kensington Gore home in the Autumn. Look out for more information on the website.

BT HIGH SPEED INTERNET CONSULTATION

BT are carrying out a consultation to gauge the level of interest in high speed fibre optic broadband internet service. Currently, Westminster has one of the lowest levels of high speed connectivity in London. If you are frustrated with your internet service, let your feelings be known at:

www.superfast-openreach.co.uk/expression-gen.aspx

MOTCOMB STREET PARTY Wednesday 24 June

Just across our border in Belgravia, The Motcomb Street Traders Association will be holding their annual street party in aid of charity. Do go along.

OPEN GARDEN SQUARES WEEKEND Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th June

This popular event, now in its 17th year, goes from strength to strength with over 200 gardens in London opening to the public, including many private and even hidden ones. Gardens range from the historic and traditional to the new and experimental and can be

discovered across 27 London boroughs. Tickets are £10 and give access to as many gardens as you can pack in. Children under 12 go free. See www.opensquares.org

VALE

Our enormous thanks to Trixie, Baroness Gardner of Parkes, who has been a stalwart of our Executive Committee for many years and represented our interests in the House of Lords, who is moving away from Knightsbridge and has retired from the Committee.

Yoshi Trishio

Chairman

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