



THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2016

Dear Member,

As always, the new year has ushered in a whole raft of new issues into which your committee members have firmly got their teeth. First and foremost, development continues at a furious pace in Knightsbridge, now commonly acknowledged to be London's - and possibly the world's - most 'super prime' area. As you will read below, work has already begun on the transformation of two sizable Edwardian blocks to provide retail, offices and residential units. Thankfully, the beautiful period facades that are so quintessentially Knightsbridge will be preserved and enhanced - in one case, even temporarily by the infamous street artist Banksy - but everything behind them will be fit for the 21st century.

Meanwhile, both Westminster and the Royal Borough have finally put in place specific guidelines to manage the excavation and creation of basements. It may just be possible that long-suffering members and other residents alike will see some relief from the seemingly relentless disruption caused by these developments. It has taken many years of consternation, complaints and consultations and the effectiveness of

the new policies remains to be seen, but it is an encouraging and significant step. The wheels of local government do not turn very quickly, but they do turn. Our huge thanks to the members of the KA Planning and Conservation Committee for their perseverance.

One KA initiative that has been moving rather more quickly in contrast is the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum. In less than twelve months, the Forum has gone from a standing start to last week's public consultation, which I hope many of you will have attended and found informative. I certainly did. Based on responses, they will now work on drafting a Neighbourhood Plan which will be voted upon at a referendum. As the Forum's tagline asks, "What should Knightsbridge be like 20 years from now?" This is a genuine game changer in local policy, giving all of us residents a significant say in shaping our 'parish' for future generations. Planning decisions will be based largely on what we want rather than a centrally dictated framework that may or may not be suitable for all neighbourhoods.

In Knightsbridge we are exceptionally fortunate in being part of a tight-knit

Vice-President: The Lady Grade

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

Treasurer: Olivia J Cox

www.knightsbridgeassociation.com

community within the metropolis that is London, and that I can write to you informally in these pages like a parish newsletter. But we can no longer pretend that our particular parish is not global in nature. The world is full of uncertainty: instability in the Middle East, the collapse of oil prices, the devaluation of formerly high flying emerging market currencies, changes in property taxation, the upcoming referendum and the possibility of Brexit. There can be no doubt that we will feel a direct impact from all of these in our little corner of London.

On a cheerful note, 2016 marks the 90th birthday of Her Majesty The Queen. Many happy returns -- much to celebrate.

PLANNING AND CONSERVATION

*Edward Davies-Gilbert and
Carol Seymour-Newton*

55-91 KNIGHTSBRIDGE, 1-3 WILLIAM STREET

As we go to press we have been informed that the crane bases have now been poured and the first of the two tower cranes will be installed over the weekend of 5th/6th March. It entails closing the bus lane and one other westbound lane, bringing the traffic flow down to one lane in both directions. Pedestrians will not be able to use the southern footpath but can cross to the other side of Knightsbridge at William Street and at a temporary traffic light-controlled crossing adjacent to Wilton Place. The date for the installation of the second crane has yet to be set by TfL and will involve similar traffic arrangements.

Scaffolding will be erected towards the end of April/beginning of May and a

screen of white sheeting will be fixed on the outside while cleaning work to the façade is in progress. We hope this will improve the appearance that has cast a shadow over this main thoroughfare into London, making it particularly unpleasant for the residents and shops on the opposite side of the road.

2 William Street has been demolished as planned to provide access for construction traffic. At the end of April Skanska will take control of the space in William Street and it will be closed to all traffic bar cyclists. Eight workmen will manage the crossing point at all times. Lorries will turn left off Knightsbridge before reversing onto the site. They will be able to pull into the closed off bus lane on Knightsbridge before turning left, to ensure no cyclists are on their inside flank. More up to date information can be found at: www.skanska.co.uk/knightsbridgeenablingworks

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ESTATE

Planning applications, which we mentioned were imminent in the Annual Report, have now been submitted to RBKC for K1, the first phase of this major redevelopment. K1 is the triangle going west from the corner of Brompton Road and Sloane Street to Hooper's Court. Plans can be viewed online and commented on, at rbkc.gov.uk The plans are far reaching and include new entrances to Knightsbridge Tube, moving the Sloane Street entrance further west on Brompton Rd; opening up an old entrance in Hooper's Court to provide much needed step-free access and enhancing this neglected area; and changing the pedestrian crossing in Brompton Rd to allow the pavement to be widened. And all behind retained facades of this historically significant

part of Knightsbridge (two postwar buildings, 33-35 Brompton Rd, will be demolished and rebuilt to reflect the style and character of the other buildings). A new rooftop restaurant is proposed while all servicing for shops, office and residential accommodation, together with some parking, will be in a new basement accessed from Basil Street.

BASEMENTS

As expected a deluge of applications for excavations were submitted to WCC just before the forthcoming restrictions on basements were able to be given due weight by the planners.

15 Lancelot Place/1 Trevor Walk

The proposal, to demolish the existing buildings and redevelop with two and a half basements, met with serious objections on grounds of bulk, height, design, overlooking and daylight/sunlight implications. The developer came back with some minor revisions.

3-11 Lancelot Place

The redevelopment of this rather mundane little terrace of mock Georgian, two storey houses from the 60s will be no great loss. The proposal is to replace them with houses of three storeys above and two below ground. The KA considered the design acceptable, with reservations about the extent of the site coverage to the rear.

Both Lancelot Place proposals were granted permission by WCC's planning committee on 23rd February.

16 Trevor Square Permission is currently being sought for basement and ground floor extensions.

12 and 13 Trevor Square Permission already exists for extensions to existing basements and other alterations.

The possibility that redevelopment of more or less the whole of the west side of Lancelot Place, at the same time as three houses in Trevor Square, backing on to it, has caused consternation amongst residents and businesses alike, and Marc Winer, chairman of our Transport and Environment Committee, is liaising closely with residents, businesses and WCC to ensure that construction traffic is managed efficiently and with the least possible disruption to all.

THE ROYAL PARKS

The Royal Parks (TRP) and Royal Parks Foundation (RPF) have agreed that they should become a new single entity. TRP feel that being part of government is no longer appropriate given the year on year decline in the government grant and that TRP self-generates two-thirds of its annual income. TRP and RPF plan to join together in a new charitable public corporation that will allow the parks to be managed and funds raised more efficiently. The KA sincerely hopes this does not lead to pressure for an increase in the number of major events which are so disruptive to park users and the ecology.

Events 2015

TRP report the lowest number of complaints generated by events. They recognise that there is always room for improvement, and many have been made as a result of the feedback received at their community liaison meetings.

Winter Wonderland Some four million people visited the event, which has generally been agreed to have been better run and more enjoyable than in previous years, though it is still considered to be extremely expensive.

Moving the site away from Serpentine Road and onto the Parade Ground, allowing full access to Serpentine Rd; improving access at Hyde Park Corner and Marble Arch; having wider and more footpaths; and increased security – all, as a result of feedback, have led to a happier experience.

Events 2016

Triathlon will not take place in 2016, but will be replaced by a swimming event.

BST Summer Concerts will again take place in July.

BBC Concerts will take place again in the second week of September.

SERPENTINE GALLERY SUMMER PAVILION 2016

Top Danish architect Bjarke Ingels will design this year's Summer Pavilion. His company, Bjarke Ingels Group, in keeping with the criteria for this annual project, has never yet built a permanent structure in the UK, but it has worked in such diverse places as China, Mexico and the Faroe Islands. The radical design has just been unveiled

(<http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/exhibitions-events/serpentine-pavilion-and-summer-houses-2016>). New for 2016 are an additional four "Summer House" structures that will form part of the installation.

LAW AND ORDER

Madeline Elsdon

WCC

The area around the Royal Albert Hall and the garden squares have been particularly hit by theft from motor vehicles. This is a priority crime being addressed in both boroughs. We advise not to leave anything of value in a car as property is being stolen even if out of sight in a locked boot.

Knightsbridge Green, the passage going through to Knightsbridge and the area around Zuma Restaurant has become a trouble hot spot and has been identified for special attention. We will be working with our Environment Committee to try and improve the lighting in the area as we know good lighting helps prevent crime.

A prolific bicycle thief targeting the area has been identified. An attempted fraud from Sainsbury's ATM was foiled but we are still advising residents where possible to withdraw money from inside a bank branch for better security.

RBKC

Over the past three months non-residential burglary has been quite high on the south side of the Brompton Road. Cars are also being broken into. There were quite a few street theft person offences over the Christmas period in the area and now we are starting to receive statistics of harassment. Police and council officers continue to conduct operations around Harrods to deal with beggars, gamblers and street traders, while Harrods staff detain pickpockets and hand them over to police.

THE PARKS/WINTER WONDERLAND

The statistics for Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens for the 4th quarter 2015 showed an overall reduction in crime of 31%. Daily tasking took place after closing time in Kensington Gardens. Thefts at Winter Wonderland were mainly of unattended bags and the Serpentine Bar and Kitchen remains a repeat location for thefts. Please take care of your property when visiting any restaurants or cafes. 3.9 million people visited Winter Wonderland this year. The attacks in Paris had an effect initially and additional security

measures were taken which were very effective. The number of crimes was significantly reduced. The taxi rank was moved to Park Lane which was an improvement. The oversized beer glasses (which contain 2 or 3 pints) were banned this year and this definitely reduced problems at closing time.

NO REDUCTION IN POLICING

Residents have expressed concern that there has been a reduction in police numbers in Hyde Park but we have been reassured that since St. James's Park and Regent's Park police stations have been closed there is actually an increased police presence based in Hyde Park.

PEDICABS

Enforcement will continue seasonally when necessary against anti-social behaviour by pedicab riders who are in the West End and Soho year round but also congregate in Knightsbridge when Middle Eastern visitors are in town.

ROUGH SLEEPERS

There are concerns about the numbers of rough sleepers in the subways at Hyde Park and consultation continues with TFL regarding gating the subways - closing them at night and opening them in the morning.

SUPERCARS

Residents must report all anti-social behaviour to the 101 number. Police action is driven by the number of recorded reports. If there is no report, it's not considered a priority and little will be done. You don't have to give detailed specifications -- just approximate time, a description, type of offence and location. You can even report it the next day.

TERRORISM THREAT

At the last meeting of the Law and Order

Committee Tim Bamford from the Counter Terrorism Focus Desk introduced a presentation designed to raise awareness and encourage us to report any suspicious behaviour immediately. There is no specific intelligence that there is an immediate threat to the UK but the status remains severe.

Confidential Hotline number 0800 789 321 (free to call).

If you feel there is an immediate threat, always call 999.

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Marc Winer

The KA has continued to work in a thoroughly collegial way with both WCC and RBKC, tackling and resolving a number of new and ongoing traffic-related situations: studying and improving pedestrian safety at the top of Sloane Street; eliminating the idling of buses parked at or near the Albert Hall; eliminating noisy early-morning deliveries to Tattersall's Tavern that are a constant irritant to guests of the Bulgari Hotel; and alleviating conflicts caused by parking of hotel guests and visitors on the territory of other establishments.

In addition, we have dealt with, or are dealing with, numerous environmental issues, including: removal of bench at the Raphael Street Post Office which became a loitering place and was always filthy because of abandoned food wrappers and hundreds of cigarette butts; addressing a foul-smelling drain due to illegal connections, affecting The Bulgari Hotel and Tattersall's; removal of a signpost in the pavement in Raphael Street that was creating an obstruction for pedestrians; and improving lighting

in the covered area in front of Tattersall's to reduce the incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour there.

The Transport and Environment Committee is small and with the rest of the KA consists entirely of enthusiastic volunteers. We are very lucky to have a great professional, a consulting transport engineer, Robert Cochrane, assisting us.

GOVERNMENT

HOUSING & PLANNING BILL

This Bill is causing concern to the KA and other associations on a number of issues, but in particular on a late government amendment tabled just before Christmas. The KA has written objecting to the clause in question which offers planning applicants/developers the option of having their plans considered by an outside agency which would then recommend them to the Council. This could mean that private consultants, who normally work for the very same developers, could be presenting major applications to planning committees rather than the Council's planning officers.

This is extremely serious and the KA will continue to monitor it very closely.

GREATER LONDON ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS Thursday 5 May

Elections will be held to elect a Mayor to replace Boris Johnson, and to elect local and London-wide members. It is vital to use your vote and have your say. If you are not already registered, there is still time to do so April 18th is the cut-off date. Anyone who is over 18, is a British, or qualifying EU or Commonwealth citizen, living in this country can register. Each citizen has to

make a personal application. This can be done either online using a simple form at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote, or by getting in touch with your local electoral registration office and asking them to post you a form.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

WCC Basement Development and Code of Construction Consultation

The KA submitted comments on the recent consultation. We pointed out that construction companies should be given more guidance as to how to carry out their projects in harmony with their neighbours. The existing Code is inadequate and the Code should involve the Councillors and Officials that are responsible for administering it. We have always believed that the Code should take into account the timing of the proposed works, with the Council having the power to postpone the issue of a licence when there is other work, obstruction or other disturbance taking place in the vicinity.

CIL

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) timetable has now been published following approval at a Full Council Meeting on 20th January. The Charging starts from 1st May 2016 and applies to all development granted planning permission on or after that date. The proposed CIL rates in Knightsbridge will be £550.00/sqm for residential and £200.00/sqm for commercial property. When a planning application is submitted an additional Information Form for CIL must be completed and submitted at the same time. Once Planning permission is granted the CIL liability is worked out by the Council and any exemptions must be claimed before work starts. Exemptions apply to

residential extensions, residential annexes and self-build housing. Payment is due within 60 days of the work starting. Additional to WCC's charge there is also a £50.00/sqm CIL charge from the Mayor of London. More information at: westminster.gov.uk/westminster-cil

RBKC

Consultation on Local Plan --

Knightsbridge and South Kensington.

The Council is reviewing the Local Plan (formally the Core Strategy) to bring it up to date. The first round of consultations took place in January and closed on 9th February. Comments and suggestions will now be assessed and a written draft will be published in the summer for further consultation. Among the concerns expressed were the negative impact cafes/restaurants are having on the area to the detriment of local amenity shops, and the lack of balance between commercial and residential interests. Although not a planning matter, the free-for-all in Hans Crescent was also raised. Once the Local Plan has gone through all the regulatory hoops and been approved at a Council Meeting it becomes an important element when deciding planning matters.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Simon Birkett, Chairman

Much has been achieved since the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (KNF or Forum) shared its first news in the KA's annual report last year. A website has been created at www.knightsbridgeforum.org (where people can ask to join the Forum or contact it), advisers have been busy and meetings held. The Forum continues to press WCC to give it the same say that a

parish council would have in the use of developer contributions towards infrastructure in the Knightsbridge area.

Most important, members of the KA's Executive Committee and the KNF's Steering Group met in early January to discuss in more detail the key issues to be addressed by the Forum. After discussions with other stakeholders as well, the KNF grouped its 10 policy priorities under five themes of Character, Community, Culture, Public spaces and utilities and the Environment. These formed the basis for the Forum's drop-in events on 26 and 27 February. Anyone who could not attend, or with further comments, can still record their views at <https://knightsbridge.commonplace.is>. For future reference, please use this facility if you want to be heard.

After the drop-in events, the Forum expects to produce a report summarising the contributions it has received for presentation to its Steering Group at the end of March and publication on its website. Next steps are likely to include very detailed further meetings with the KA, the Knightsbridge Business Group, the Exhibition Road Cultural Group and others on precise policies before a second set of drop-in meetings or the first formal consultation on a draft Neighbourhood Plan. Watch this space.

THE ASSOCIATION

Christine Gilbertson

We are sad to report the death in January of Christine Gilbertson, who retired as KA Treasurer in 2008 after almost 20 years in the post. She kept our finances in meticulous order, recording all expenditure incoming and outgoing in a beautifully hand written

ledger. During her treasurership she was also a member of the Executive Committee where her advice and comments were invaluable. She will be much missed by her family and friends.

Visit and reception at the Royal Geographical Society Wednesday, 2 March

As we go to press members are looking forward to a tour and reception at this landmark institution on Kensington Gore. We are to be given privileged access to the collection of artefacts not normally on view and will enjoy a guided tour and drinks reception. It promises to be a very special evening.

Eaton Square Concerts the Spring schedule of Thursday evening concerts at St Peter's Eaton Square, started on 3 March and concludes on 7th April with a recital by Peter Donohoe, one of the foremost pianists of our time. Full details and further information at www.eatonsquareconcerts.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP

As ever we are always eager to identify residents of the area, old and new, who have yet to join the KA. Membership application can be completed online (knightsbridgeassociation.com), and physical forms are also available (info@knightsbridgeassociation.com), so do get in touch if you have a new neighbour, or would just like to get to know the other people in your street, square or mansion block and would be happy to do a membership drive.

knightsbridgeassociation.com
@KAKnightsbridge

Members who are digitally oriented will have noticed that our refreshed website is now fully live. As we move

confidently into the 21st century, the KA will be actively using the full arsenal of online tools to engage with our members and the wider community. Becoming a fully paperless organization remains our long-term goal.

In a related development, the KA is now on twitter. Please do follow us at @KAKnightsbridge as we anticipate that this will in future become the fastest and most efficient way for us to keep in touch with members in live time. If you are new to twitter, do not be afraid! The registration process (www.twitter.com) is extremely straightforward, requires no payment of any kind and you will not be bombarded by unwanted emails.

Many thanks to Executive Committee member Satya Crystal for supervising this multi-year effort and continuing to keep an eye on improvements and enhancements to the site. Our gratitude also goes to Neil Carthy, who has quietly kept the KA's online effort humming along as our webmaster for the past five years, and is now stepping down. You will, I am sure, want to join me in welcoming as our new webmaster, Dr John Pollard. A long term resident of Beaufort Gardens (and the founder of the eponymous Residents' Association), John has enthusiastically taken on the challenge of being the KA's eyes, ears and mouthpiece online. He is also an accomplished musician and composer who might just be persuaded to overcome his modesty to entertain us with his skills at the AGM...

Yoshi Nishio

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