

# THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

June 2008

Dear Member,

Without question the most momentous event to have occurred in London in recent weeks has been Boris Johnson's ousting of Ken Livingstone. Important though this has been for the entire capital, it is especially important for our locality. This was reflected in the voting. Whereas Boris convincingly pipped Ken at the post in Greater London, with 1,169,000 votes to Ken's 1,028,000, in West Central Boris won by a landslide, with almost twice as many votes as his predecessor – 91,515 (56%) to 47,705 (29%). This is a staggering majority, and reflects how strongly our part of London wants change in a great raft of areas, from Law and Order to Traffic, from Planning & Building to the Environment...the list goes on and on. The magnitude of Boris Johnson's support in West London shows how popular his victory has been here – and how much he now has to live up to. We wish him every success.

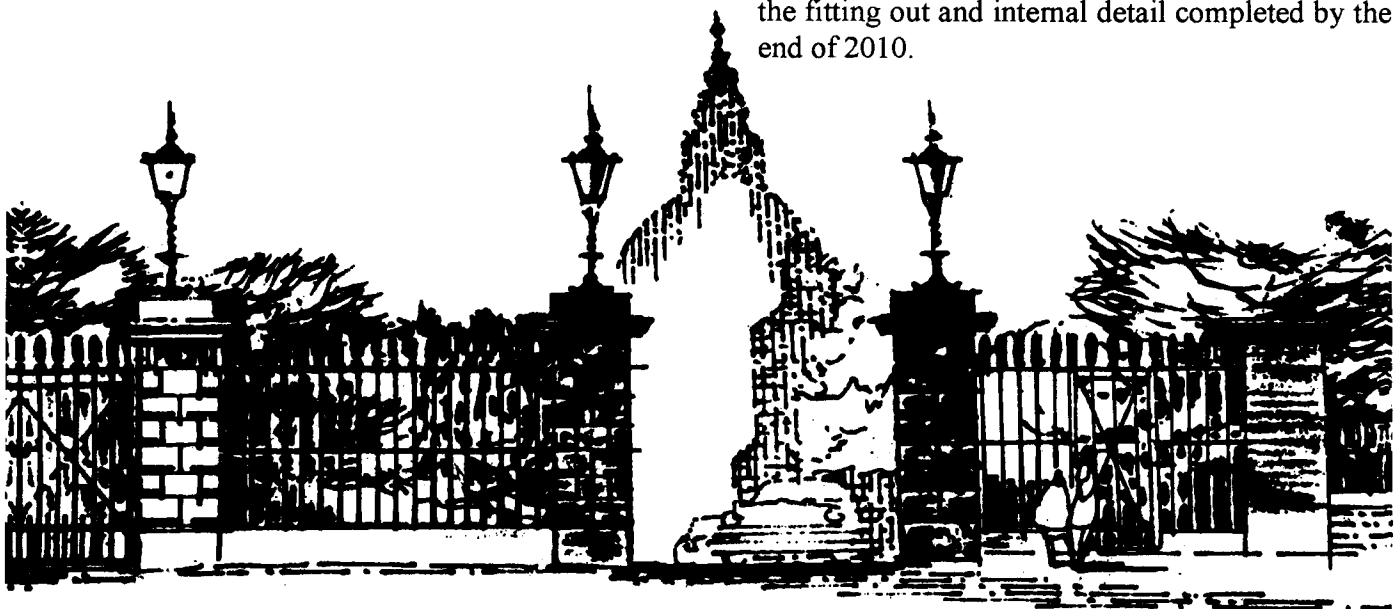
### Planning and Conservation

#### Sir Simon Milton

One of Boris Johnson's first steps was to appoint Sir Simon Milton, Leader of WCC for the last 8 years, to be his Senior Adviser for Planning, with responsibility for the London Plan. Sir Simon wrote to us telling us that while he has resigned his post as WCC Leader he will continue to represent the Lancaster Gate ward and remain Chairman of the London Government Association. He has been a first-class WCC Leader, and a friend of KA, keeping council tax low while introducing a number of successful initiatives to increase local participation and improve local facilities. We greatly welcome his appointment to this key post.

#### One Hyde Park

Building works are progressing well, but severe traffic problems lie ahead. Details can be found on the enclosed leaflet. The building's four 'pavilions' should be finished by next July, with the fitting out and internal detail completed by the end of 2010.



*President:* The Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge

*Vice-President:* The Lady Grade

*Chairman:* Winston Fletcher, *Vice Chairmen:* Michael Wright CMG RIBA FRICS, Edward Davies-Gilbert

*Hon. Secretary:* Carol Seymour-Newton, *Hon. Treasurer:* Phyllis Lusher.

### **South Kensington Station: Improved traffic circulation**

At a recent meeting, a representative of London Underground announced that in addition to the upgrading of South Kensington Station they are, once again, actively considering the redevelopment of the site and the improvement of traffic flow. A feasibility study is being prepared for consultation with RBKC, local residents and other interested parties.

RBKC considers the traffic improvement scheme around the Station to be phase one of their Exhibition Road Project, though for the moment we have no further news on the main part of the project. It failed to obtain funding from the Lottery.

### **Excavation of Basements and Gardens**

At a KA meeting with WCC's Director of Planning and senior planning officers in April, subterranean development was at the top of our agenda. WCC is equally worried by the growing demand for this type of underground development, but government policy favours construction of basements as a practical way to increase living accommodation, particularly where constraints on listed buildings prevent building upwards. Local planning authorities are required to follow government policy and have very limited powers to refuse such applications.

We asked the Council, when granting permission, to include a set of conditions to reduce the disruption and nuisance suffered by neighbours during the construction period - in particular a requirement that a full time site agent with a dedicated phone number should be available for residents to contact.

Meanwhile we shall continue to object to all major basement schemes as a matter of principle, and take the matter up with other amenity associations.

### **Imperial College**

#### ***Redevelopment of Eastside, Princes Gardens***

The residents' committee continues to meet regularly to deal with any problems arising from the Eastside building, where work continues to make good progress. Residents of Princes Gate Mews have complained about noise, particularly from the communal kitchens in the recently completed Southside building. The College is seeking ways to mitigate the problem.

**Imperial College 24hr Security: 020 7589 1000.**  
***The College has asked us to point out that this number, unlike the switchboard, is always***

***manned, and for this reason it does not have an answerphone.***

### **Kensington Palace**

The Palace has applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant for major improvements to the parts of the Palace open to the public. It is intended to 'reconnect' the Palace with Kensington Gardens, create a new open space to the east and open up the view from the south. There will also be internal changes to improve facilities for visitors.

### **Natural History Museum**

Following criticisms from local amenity societies, including KA, and from English Heritage, concerning the Museum's misuse of their garden, we understand ARUP have been commissioned to produce a 'strategy' which will address the question of the use of the gardens for commercial purposes unconnected with the Museum. Local residents will be consulted.

### **WCC Funding for Local Projects**

KA has put forward five projects for consideration by WCC ranging from traffic reduction on certain residential roads to the restoration of missing railings and lamps, and even a 'playground' for the elderly. Our ward councillors will consider our suggestions and forward their recommendation to the relevant WCC Cabinet Member.

### **South Kensington Farmers' Market, Bute Street**

The first new street market in central London for over 100 years opened on May 10, and will open every Saturday from 9am to 1pm. Further information on [www.lfm.org.uk](http://www.lfm.org.uk)

### **Hans Crescent Improvements**

RBKC are finalising their plans for upgrading the Hans Crescent cul-de-sac - currently so badly run-down. A wide central strip with special paving, planting and seating will share the area on each side. This will provide limited vehicular access to Harrods and the shops on the opposite side. Parking will not be permitted on the shared space.

### **Harrods Pavement Café: Hans Road/Basil Street**

As a result of planning permission dating back to 1997, Harrods will soon be opening a pavement café attached to their Ladurée restaurant. Initially this will be a temporary scheme with timber decking extending from the pavement. Subsequently there will be a permanent layout

where the café (limited to 25 tables and 100 chairs) will share the space with a new, specially paved road surface. The café will be subject to strict conditions in respect of opening times and control of litter.

### **Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens: 7<sup>th</sup> July Memorial**

A memorial to commemorate the 52 people who died in the bombing of 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 is to be set up in Hyde Park. Designs, on which members of the bereaved families are being consulted, are well advanced. The favoured site is on the Park perimeter between the Dorchester and Hilton hotels.

### ***Hyde Park Events***

Look out for road closure signs during much of June and July.

#### **7<sup>th</sup> June: Red Bull Flugtag**

Flying machine competition over the Serpentine.

#### **27<sup>th</sup> June: Nelson Mandela 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration Concert**

#### **28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> June: Hard Rock concerts**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> July: Music events**

#### **23<sup>rd</sup> August: Steel band competition, not yet confirmed.**

### **Noise numbers:**

***WCC 24 hour Noise Line: 020 7641 2000***

***Parks Noise Line (during events only):***

***07896 296941***

## **Transport and Environment**

### **Policies of the new Mayor**

Boris Johnson's manifesto included three transport commitments that are particular important locally. He committed himself to drop the CO<sub>2</sub> Charge of £25 for large cars; to keep the Low Emission Zone; and to consult again on the Western Extension of the Congestion Charging Zone. We shall watch and wait to see how these policies come to fruition. We have pressed for two years for the introduction of 'tag and beacon' road pricing in this area, as the fairest mechanism for road user charging. We also await news on how the Mayor plans to tackle other key transport and environment problems e.g. London's poor air quality.

### **Prince Consort Road**

Separate to our concerns regarding RBKC's plans for Exhibition Road, we are worried about the sharp increase already occurring in traffic volumes and buses and coaches in Prince Consort

Road (PCR). Towards 20 buses can sometimes be found in PCR, often with their engines left idling for long periods, on single and double yellow lines, occasionally blocking whole lanes where there is parallel parking of cars, and standing where traffic zigzags occur near the pedestrian crossing. Much rubbish is being dumped there too. We have asked WCC for their help, and to consider how traffic flows are managed in PCR, and at the junctions at its eastern end, and at the northern end of Exhibition Road.

### **Tube noise**

We have written again to TfL, having collected noise meter readings in one of the local churches, to complain formally about the noise from the London Underground. We still await their response.

### **Seven months of road resurfacing at Scotch Corner**

In May TfL commenced a major road resurfacing project at Scotch Corner. There will now be constant disruption until at least November 2008, with two peak periods: from late-May to mid-July when all northbound traffic and buses in Sloane Street will be diverted at Pont Street towards Belgrave Square and Beauchamp Place; and from early-August to mid-September when Knightsbridge will be reduced to eastbound traffic only i.e. all westbound traffic will be diverted by way of Brompton Road, Cromwell Place and Exhibition Road. Working with the developers of Number One Hyde Park, a table has been prepared to summarise the impact of these street works on traffic and pedestrians. With our encouragement, the developers have also been pressing for traffic to be warned in advance, through the media and signage, to avoid the junction during the period of this roadwork. A table is enclosed with this Newsletter and it will appear, and be updated if necessary, on our website. We hope you find it useful.

### **Exhibition Road Closure**

Exhibition Road will be closed on **Saturday June 21** when the London Festival of Architecture will be holding a 'Sights and Sounds Festival'. Details are being sent by the Council to residents in Exhibition Road and Princes Gate Mews. For two weeks from 20<sup>th</sup> June the Festival Pavilion will be sited in Princes Gardens.

## **Law and Order**

### **Burglary Operation: 100% success**

The Knightsbridge and Belgravia Safer Neighbourhood Team aims to reduce burglary

both by improving detection and increasing security. The Team gathers information on known burglars who have been arrested in the past on our ward, and through leafleting, free security advice and high visibility patrols during peak times on identified known crime hot spots, it makes vulnerable premises more difficult to burgle. In February 2008 the result was a 100% reduction in reported residential burglaries and a 25% reduction in reported non-residential burglaries compared with February 2007. Great news – and congratulations to the Team!

### **Long-Term Solution to the Begging Problem**

The Brompton Safer Neighbourhood Team is now running an ongoing operation to deal with the begging problem. The Team is seeking Anti-Social Behaviour Orders on all the beggars to stop them returning to this area long-term once the ASBO has been granted. ASBO's are not issued lightly - a huge amount of evidence must be put before the court before one can be imposed. Residents who have been harassed, alarmed or distressed by beggars are urged to put pen to paper as we need to show the courts this is a significant problem, and action must be taken before it gets worse. If you would like to submit a statement through the KA we will pass it to the police.

### **Vroom, Vroom**

Residents infuriated by the anti-social behaviour of some drivers of high powered cars with unreadable foreign number plates will be cheered to know that KA Executive Committee member Baroness Gardner asked the Government, in a House of Lords debate on EU registered cars, what action was proposed to deal with cars registered in 'other' countries, often with number plates unreadable by our automatic number plate recognition system. These drivers escape parking penalties and congestion charging simply because their numbers cannot be recognised. Some countries issue temporary number plates, and the drivers pay a bond which is returned when they leave the country. Lord Bassam of Brighton accepted that there is a problem and the Government aims to resolve the issue in Spring 2009.

### **Dogs and Waterfowl don't mix**

The Royal Parks have asked the police to enforce the rule that dogs are not allowed in the water in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. As far as we know no one has yet been prosecuted, but the maximum fine of £200 would make it a pricey swim!

### **Recycling**

WCC recently circulated residents with an excellent, detailed leaflet on exactly what can be recycled and what to do with other items. **It is vital to recycle as much as possible, but please remember, recycling in Westminster is only collected once a week.**

**Any Questions:**

**WCC Residents: Tel: 020 7641 2000**

**Email: [recycling@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:recycling@westminster.gov.uk)**

**K&C Residents: Tel: 020 7361 3001**

**Email: [streetline@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:streetline@rbkc.gov.uk)**

### **Social Events**

The tour and lunch of the Royal Albert Hall in May proved extremely popular with some 60 members participating. The standard of commentary was excellent, informative and full of fascinating anecdotes. Before the local election we held an 'Air Quality Hustings', organised by our Traffic and Environment committee. This was a new idea, at which leading local candidates put their policies on air quality to the audience, and a lively debate – not surprisingly – ensued.

**Bonhams** will be generously inviting all KA members to another preview evening on November 3 2008. Jewellery and Furniture will be on view. Full details to follow.

### **Other Events**

#### **London Open Squares**

**weekend – 7-8 June:** Well over 100 private gardens will be open to the public, tickets and information available from [www.opensquares.org](http://www.opensquares.org) and in the gardens on both days. Ennismore Gardens and Rutland Gate lower garden will be participating on the Sunday only.

**My personal thanks go to all our Committee members, who do so much for the neighbourhood - and many thanks to you, for reading.**

With best wishes



*Winston Fletcher, Chairman*

#### **The Knightsbridge Association**

6 Montpelier Street, London SW7 1EZ

[www.knightsbridgeassociation.org.uk](http://www.knightsbridgeassociation.org.uk)

Tel: 020 7823 9103