

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

September 2008

Dear Member,

We are often asked: 'How does The Knightsbridge Association go about getting things done in the neighbourhood?' – and a recent meeting of our Planning and Conservation Committee provided the perfect answer.

The meeting was attended by Westminster City Councillor Alistair Moss, Chairman of WCC's important Planning and City Development Committee. He came both to put across to us Westminster's current thinking on planning matters, and to listen to our concerns. But above all he came to say that WCC believes it can only do its job properly if it keeps in close touch with societies like ours. 'Societies like The Knightsbridge Association', he said, 'provide us with the clout to do our job, to ensure we know what residents really want.' And similarly – the other side of the coin – keeping closely in touch with local councils, the police, and all the other neighbourhood institutions, provides KA with the 'clout to do our job'. That is the answer to the question: it is a two way process – by working together we get things done.

Planning and Conservation

One Hyde Park

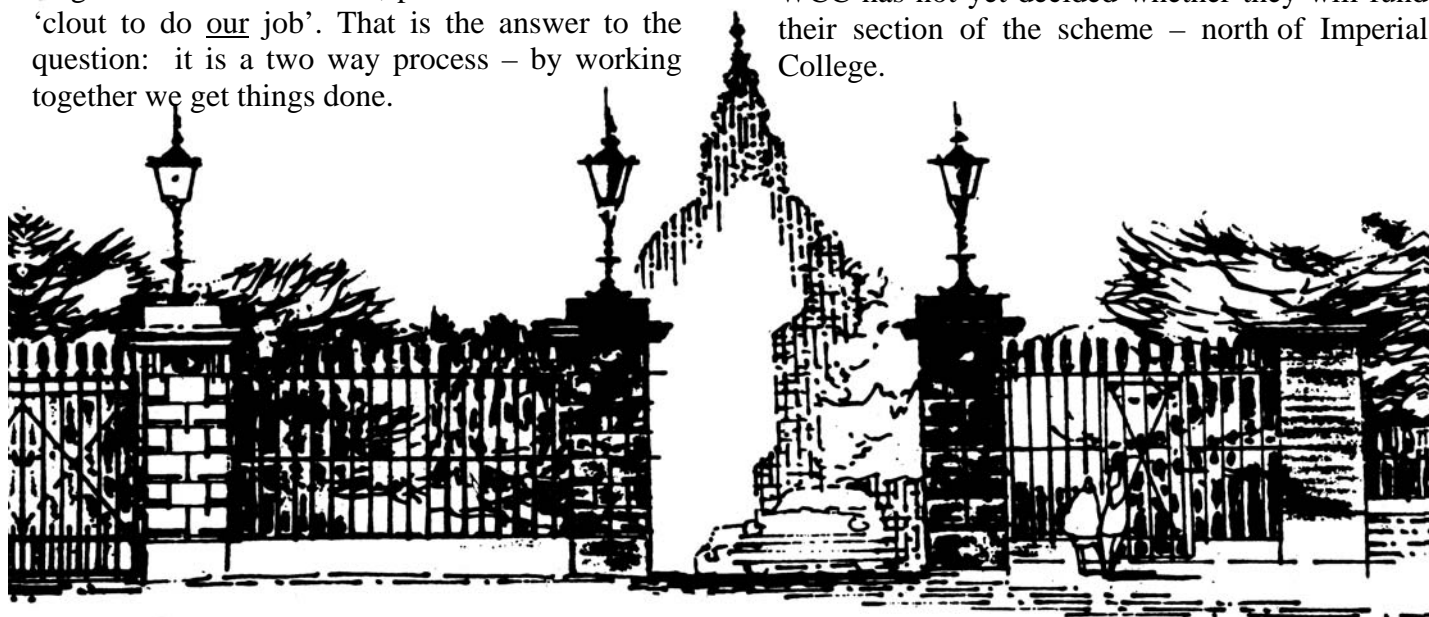
The structural frames of the four blocks are rising rapidly and it is now possible to see how the buildings have been moved forward from the old Bowater House line, thus losing some of the openness of Scotch House junction. The severe traffic problems continue, and are likely to do so until November – for more details see the Transport and Environment section.

Normandie Hotel

Fresh proposals are being prepared for a new hotel on this site. We had a preliminary meeting with the architect in August when the broad principles of the scheme were outlined.

Exhibition Road Project

A meeting was held at RBKC Town Hall to update Amenity Societies on progress. RBKC will fund half the estimated cost and negotiations continue with TfL and others for the remainder. WCC has not yet decided whether they will fund their section of the scheme – north of Imperial College.



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.

A large number of questions regarding the scheme have not yet been answered. RBKC hope to commence their part of the project in 2009.

South Kensington Station

There are currently three schemes affecting the future of the station:-

- An 'Enhanced Refurbishment' agreed in 2007 but delayed because of the contractor's financial difficulties.
- An extension of the Ticket Hall over part of the District Line platform to allow for the insertion of a lift from the Ticket Hall to the platform, and a further lift from the Ticket Hall to the pedestrian subway. Work is scheduled to start in 2009.
- Yet another scheme for the development of the site. A draft 'Architects' Brief' has been circulated for comments by Amenity Societies, all of whom – like us - appear to favour a low key, conservation-led approach, rather different from the tone of the Brief.

Traffic circulation round South Kensington

There will be changes around the station, but details have not yet been published. It is intended to include a sizeable 'piazza' south of the station, which will include a decorative feature.

Subterranean Housing Developments

Encouraged by the Government, both local Councils seem to accept that subterranean extensions to houses should be treated as 'Permitted Developments'. Consequently all planning applications appear to gain approval. We question the justification for approving developments that double or treble the floor area of an existing house, and we are seeking the views of the London Forum and other Amenity Societies.

Imperial College

Princes Gardens, Halls of Residence

Construction of Eastside is progressing well, but complaints from the residents of Princes Gate Mews regarding problems, especially noise from the new Southside kitchens, have caused us to write to WCC drawing attention to the need for an urgent solution. If necessary, changes should be made to the design of Eastside to avoid a replication of these problems.

Complaints 24hr telephone number:

020 7589 1000

Natural History Museum

At a recent meeting to discuss the management of the Museum, it was hinted that this autumn's London Fashion Week might be the last to be held on the front lawn, which we would welcome.

Darwin Centre: Phase Two

The new building to house the Museum's priceless collection of insects and plants has been completed, but moving the collection will take another year, and the building will not open until 2009.

Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens

Summer Concert season

So far we have received no comments from members, so hopefully no undue problems have been experienced.

Autumn events – look out for road closures.

Hyde Park: 7 Sept: Adidas 5 km run for women

13/14 Sept: Proms in the Park

14 Sept: Elite Triathlon

Central Parks: 12 Oct: Half marathon

Hyde Park: 2 Nov: London to Brighton Veteran Car Run

Noise numbers:

Parks Noise Line (during events only):

07896 296941

WCC 24 hour Noise Line: 020 7641 2000

RBKC 24 hour Noise Line: 020 7361 3484

Tree Dedication: On 29 July a short dedication ceremony was held for two trees, one in Hyde Park and one in Kensington Gardens, both donated by KA following the loss of trees in the 2007 storm.

Memorials

Sited between Curzon and Stanhope Gates, the memorial to victims of the '7/7' London bombings will consist of 52 vertical elements to commemorate the 52 victims. Commenting on this memorial, we said the site will not detract from the amenities of Hyde Park, but expressed concern that the Park is in danger of becoming a repository for an increasing number of national memorials.

Another memorial, this one to commemorate the abolition of the slave trade, may be sited in the Rose Garden near Hyde Park Corner

Serpentine Gallery

This year's temporary pavilion is well worth a visit for its fine interior woodwork and spectacular ceiling. As in previous years it is open to the

public during the day and is used for lectures and social events in the evenings.

Winter Wonderland

Held last year for the first time on Serpentine Road, east of the Dell Café, it will be repeated this year in much the same form. In general it was well organised and proved to be very popular.

Hans Crescent

Work on upgrading the cul-de-sac has been delayed due to lack of funding, but should now start in October and be completed by April 2009. It has become a disgraceful dumping ground for litter. Crowds sit around consuming takeaways and leave their litter behind. RBKC don't place bins on the pavement for security reasons and because 'it adds to street clutter'. Surely it is better to have 'street clutter' rather than oceans of 'street litter'?. We are consulting RBKC and the Police to discover whether the security reasons hold good.

Harrods Pavement Café, Hans Road

Approval for the café dates back to 1997 as part of Harrods redevelopment of the Crown Court. It opened at the end of July to a chorus of disapproval from residents complaining of noise and chaotic traffic conditions following a change in the road layout. There are also reports that the café attracts beggars and other undesirables.

The Knightsbridge Estate

This is the area bounded by Brompton Road, Hans Crescent, Basil Street and Sloane Street. We have made a formal submission to English Heritage for the listing of five buildings in this part of the Hans Town conservation area. Details will be contained in our Annual Report

WCC Funding for local projects

We put forward several proposals for WCC funding. £5,000 has been approved towards the replacement of the railings to Rutland Gate lower garden. Of our other proposals, there is no suitable neighbourhood site for a recreation area for the elderly, but the Royal Parks are showing interest in the scheme. There is some doubt regarding the proposal that WCC funds should be made available to investigate the reduction of traffic on residential roads. The replacement of the remaining missing railings and lamps along Rutland Gate and Princes Gate is still being considered.

Transport and Environment

Road Works

Knightsbridge has recently been plagued by horrendous traffic problems. These have included unplanned gas works on the eastbound carriageway of the Cromwell Road, ongoing road works at Scotch Corner and additional road works along Knightsbridge. Transport for London commented on August 6th that "the temporary works [at Scotch Corner] have reduced road capacity at this key junction by up to half, and had "a negative impact on traffic in the area". This must be one of the great understatements of history! We highlighted the planned works in our June Newsletter, but that does not make them more bearable. We are pressing WCC and others to mitigate local traffic problems by: the introduction of the long-promised right turn at Scotch Corner, and traffic calming measures to protect residential streets. We may fight for legal agreements to protect (and/or compensate) the area from traffic problems caused by major future developments.

Tube Noise

Knightsbridge should not have to suffer noise from the London Underground. It is particularly disturbing therefore that, over the last two years, tube noise has been heard in a number of local properties - and it seems to be getting worse. Darren Johnson, Green Party Chair of the Environment Committee at the London Assembly, intervened personally on our behalf with Mayor Johnson, and so Tube Lines sent an independent noise consultant to investigate the problem in early August. Tube Lines has now said further investigations are taking place to address the concerns KA has raised.

Air Quality

The new European Union directive on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe came into force on June 11th. Since then the government has admitted that - along some 40 kms of arterial roads in London, including those around Scotch Corner - it still has no plans comply with the air quality laws for particulate matter by 2011. More significantly, the UK must reduce concentrations of a toxic gas, nitrogen dioxide, by more than one-third near London's busiest roads by January 2010 if it is to avoid infringement action by the European Commission to enforce World Health Organisation based air quality laws. These unacceptable breaches are all caused by road transport, with older diesel vehicles being a particular problem. Watch this space.

Law and Order

UPDATE ON VROOM VROOM

Naturally we welcome overseas visitors to Knightsbridge, but anti-social traffic in the area and the problem of high-powered cars speeding and revving their engines late into the night have continued to disturb many of our residents throughout the summer. We have raised police awareness, and as a result Customs and Excise have now impounded some of the offending cars. Many of them lack adequate insurance, some have illegal blacked out windows, some even lack number plates required in this country. We hope new legislation will alleviate the situation in all respects before next summer.

THE ROYAL PARKS

Since July there have been *ad hoc* water fights in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. These were publicised on 'Facebook', an internet site. Consequently young people came from far and wide, and they degenerated into real fights, robberies and a police officer was assaulted. Also in the Parks, cyclists continue to speed and ignore signs. In August a dog was sadly killed by a hit and run cyclist in Kensington Gardens. If you have any information about this please pass it to the police.

IDENTITY FRAUD

Identity fraud has doubled in the last year. London is the identity fraud capital of the world, with twice as many reported incidents as anywhere else in the country: take care!

IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF CRIME - REPORT IT!

Only reported crime can be recorded by the police. Crimes such as rape and domestic violence often go unreported because the victims are too frightened to admit what happened. We know of teenagers who have had property stolen but are too embarrassed to call the police. Drug related crimes often go unreported because witnesses may be implicated and are afraid to come forward. If peoples' attitudes to reporting crime changed it would have a big impact on statistics.

ARE YOU TOO FRIGHTENED OF CRIME?

People who read tabloid newspapers fear crime more than people who read broadsheets. Yes, be careful – but don't let the scaremongering press depress you.

Cleansing

The tourist season and school holidays have resulted in the usual increase in litter. The lack of bins in Brompton Road and the Parks compounds the problem. In a recent Panorama programme, Bill Bryson, President of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, pleaded that a far higher priority be given to clearing litter from our streets and the countryside by national and local authorities. We wholeheartedly agree.

Recycling

We still need to increase our efforts to recycle. Are you doing your share? If you have any questions for your Council:

WCC Residents: telephone: 020 7641 2000

Email: recycling@westminster.gov.uk

RBKC Residents: telephone: 020 7361 3001

Email: recycling@rbkc.gov.uk

Social Events

Royal Opera House - a behind the scenes tour and lunch on Thursday 23rd October. You should already have received a leaflet with details. If you would like to come we suggest you apply quickly, as numbers are limited.

Bonhams - will generously be inviting KA members to another preview evening on Monday November 3rd – you will be receiving a personal invitation from Bonhams shortly.

AGM and Christmas Party

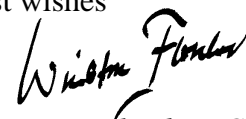
Will be on Tuesday, 9th December, but due to refurbishment of the Royal College of Music's Concert Hall, will be held in the Sir Alexander Fleming building, Imperial College. Details to follow.

Other Events

BritArt: Special Visit for members: Thursday 11th September – see enclosed leaflet for details.

Very many thanks as always for your support – and for reading.

With best wishes



Winston Fletcher, Chairman

The Knightsbridge Association

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