

THE

ISSUE 68 | JANUARY 2021

BELGRAVIA SOCIETY MAGAZINE

THE ONLY
INDEPENDENT
VOICE FOR
BELGRAVIA

IN THE DOG
HOUSE

MARK THOMPSON
OPENS THE DOOR TO
HIS HOTEL FOR DOGS

365
DAYS

IS TIME SPINNING
OUT OF CONTROL?

HAPPY NEW YEAR?

*We're hopeful! Nickie Aiken MP
answers your vaccine questions*



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**Welcome to
The Belgravia Society
magazine, covering all
aspects of village life in
Belgravia and beyond.**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Mary Regnier-Leigh

CHAIRMAN

George Waite

PHOTOGRAPHY

Mary Regnier-Leigh

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Fredd Design

www.fredd.co.uk

This magazine has been independently produced by the Committee of The Belgravia Society on a voluntary basis with regular contributions from local residents and other authors in and around Belgravia.

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The Belgravia Society
63 Belgravia Court, 33 Ebury Street,
London SW1W 0NY, United Kingdom

www.thebelgraviasociety.com

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



George Waite
Chairman of
The Belgravia Society
and ESRA

**To celebrate the
past, improve
the present, and
engage the future**

From the very outset, we decided to create the Belgravia Society as a charity. All our members and Committee members contribute their time voluntarily. Membership is free and open to every member of our community.

We survive on the generosity of our members and are indebted for their continuing support. Thank you.

Helen Oratore is our Vice Chairman and a fellow Trustee and is championing our drive to encourage the younger members of our Society to provide us with a steer for the future. This is Helen's message:

"For many young people the greatest concern after COVID-19 and the economy, remains the environment. Lockdowns and various extended periods of isolation have encouraged many to reflect, not only on the declining health of our fellow man, but also of our planet. David Attenborough's book, 'A Life On Our Planet', is an essential read. He sets out clearly how humans have made various choices which have led us to today's climate crisis and contributed to the likelihood of zoonotic pandemics. He is very clear that unless we address climate change urgently, within the next 50 years or so, the destruction of our planet will be irreversible. He does however state that he is 'hopeful' that we shall meet those challenges.

So, the time for commitment to change is NOW – RIGHT NOW for all of us. It is with that in mind that the Belgravia Society is pleased to announce that our younger members are in the process of organising a number of meetings with local stakeholders to discuss various problems such as sustainability issues, reducing air pollution, promoting zero carbon projects, increasing recycling efforts and traffic reduction.

One of the stated aims of the Belgravia Society is to engage in the future and there clearly is no better time to do this than at the start of a new year. We are delighted that a number of our younger members have become more active and shown real initiative and positivity in discovering and promoting new ways to support the local community.

Several of our young Belgravians have given their time free of charge and undertaken tutoring projects and assisted with online teaching of school children using video conferencing. They have been involved in the organisation of art projects for up-and-coming artists.

In order to fully engage in the future, it is important that we encourage the younger generation to be fully involved in the community, to continue to build a world that they can nurture and of which they can be proud." ●

YOUR VACCINE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

by Nickie Aiken MP



Happy New Year! I hope you and your family had a safe and happy festive period under the circumstances we are all living through. I know that for many people it was incredibly difficult not being able to spend it with friends and family as they normally would. Hopefully, next year will be vastly different.

Key to having a more normal Christmas next year will be the successful rollout of a COVID-19 vaccine. Since the start of December, I have been receiving an increasing number of enquiries about the vaccine rollout across Westminster. I therefore thought I would take the opportunity here to address a couple of the most asked questions.

HOW IS THE COVID VACCINE ROLLOUT GOING ACROSS WESTMINSTER?

At the time of writing, the vast majority of over-80s has received their first dose of the vaccine across the City. Frontline health and social care workers have also

been receiving their first jabs. Some in both groups have also received their second dose of the vaccine. At the start of the week I'm writing this, the process of contacting the over-70s for their jabs also began.

WHERE IS THE VACCINE BEING ADMINISTERED IN WESTMINSTER?

In Westminster, the vaccine is currently being administered at a number of different sites including a number of GP's practices and some pharmacists. Two large scale vaccination sites have been set up at Lords Cricket Ground and the South Westminster Centre in Vincent Square. There will also be a further hub based at Marble Arch which opens at the beginning of February.

I was fortunate enough to visit the South Westminster Centre earlier this week. The atmosphere was incredibly upbeat! Talking to staff, there was a very real sense of the significance of what they are continuing to do: provide us all with a way out of the pandemic we have faced over the past year.



Nickie with Dr Jan Maniera, Director, South Westminster Primary Care Network, and Dr Sheila Neogi, Chairman, South Westminster Primary Care Network, during her visit to the South Westminster Centre.

I'm sure that you will have other questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, so I've set up a Frequently Asked Questions page on my website which might answer them. You can find it at www.nickie.news/vaccine.

In the meantime, if you would like to contact me about any issue or concern, please do email or call me – details below. You can also keep up to date with what I am doing as your MP by following me on social media, as below. ●

Email:

nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk

Tel: 020 7219 4553

Follow at:

   @twocitiesnickie



Registered Charity No. 1168619

BUILDING A STRONG COMMUNITY

**To celebrate the past,
improve the present,
and engage the future**

The more members we have, the louder our collective voice will be.

JOIN US TODAY!

Benefits include:

- Monthly magazine
- Opportunity to join us at any of our monthly meetings
- Have your say on local matters
- Advice where possible on planning issues
- Invitation to our AGM and opportunity to vote

**[www.thebelgrviasociety.com/
online-membership-form](http://www.thebelgrviasociety.com/online-membership-form)**

Please fill in the online form by clicking on the link above link.

Alternatively, print the application form on page 23 and post your completed form to

63 Belgravia Court
33 Ebury Street
London SW1W 0NY



IN THE DOG HOUSE



Mark Thompson

Simon Davie, one of our Trustees, introduced us to Mark Thompson who, 26 years ago, began to develop The Dog House, Activity Holiday and Education Centre, as it was important to him that he could remedy problems he saw at many other dog boarding facilities. He knew the key was a strong emphasis on fun teaching methods with both mental and physical exercise.



Mark tells us there is not a bark to be heard making it hard to imagine that thirty dogs are waking up and getting ready for their day at The Dog House.

A recurring question from visitors posed to Mark Thompson is, “How do you manage to prevent the dogs from barking?” He says the answer is simple... a busy, stimulated and happy dog has no reason to bark for attention.

Each dog at The Dog House is taken out for a minimum of four outings per day. On arrival and departure, dogs are given a full makeover groom which includes physical examinations for any health issues and each dog leaves with a personal health and behavioural report: “We also closely monitor our guests’ weight and adjust their diets accordingly.”

Tucked away in Carmarthenshire, The Dog House offers an exemplary service for all sizes and breeds. As well as Activity Holidays, The Dog House runs a range of training courses including Puppy, Companion, Gun Dog and Flight Desensitising. All the teaching methods used are fun and non-confrontational. Instead, success is found in clear communication, precise timing, motivation by control of toys, games, food, affection and permissions. “We always reward good behaviours rather than chastising the undesirable.”

For owners’ convenience, The Dog House runs a weekly, state-of-the-art bus from Wales to West London with pre-arranged pick-ups and drop-offs along the M4 corridor. Additionally, Mark is available for one-to-one home visit lessons in London and some southern counties, focusing on early learning for young puppies and troubleshooting training sessions for owners and their dogs.

We asked if the pandemic affected The Dog House: “We have had to become adaptable, like most businesses”, Mark says. “Initially, Activity Holiday numbers reduced dramatically due to the travel restrictions, so we increased places for our training courses. With so many people adopting puppies, our puppy course has become booked up weeks in advance. We have received many wonderful messages from some owners stuck in countries all over the world saying that the rest of their lives might be in chaos, but the one thing they don’t have to worry about is their dog being properly looked after.”

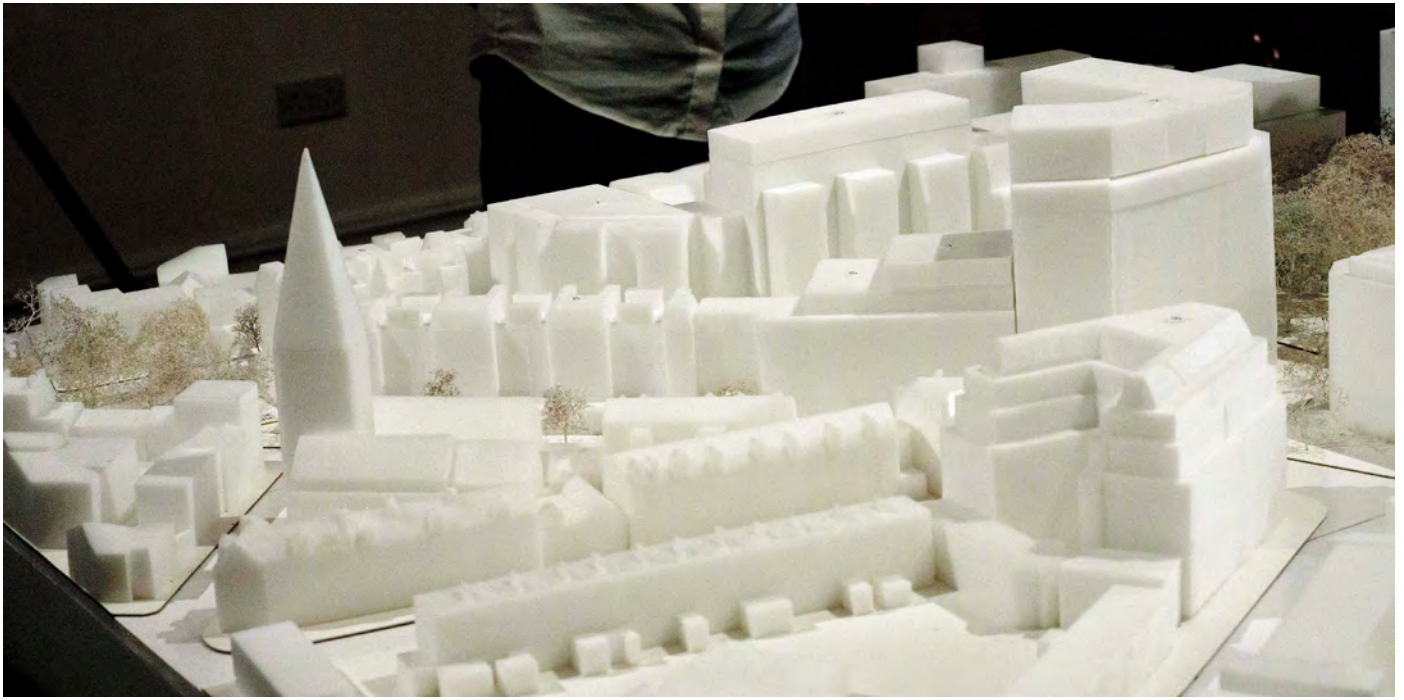
For immediate help, we have an App called ‘Dog Trainer in your pocket’. Mark even has an online shop.

The Dog House continues to strive for excellence providing the best home-from-home it can for its guests. As one client said when asked where she kennels her dog, “I never send my dog to a kennel! I send my dog to The Dog House.” ●



CUNDY STREET
FLATS

8 | THE BELGRAVIA SOCIETY MAGAZINE



CUNDY STREET DEVELOPMENT

A MORAL DILEMMA

We are constantly asked what is happening over Cundy Street planning application. You will recall, this involves a large development on the site of the Cundy Street flats and affects Orange Square.

A great deal of correspondence has taken place with regard to the deprivation of light from surrounding houses. I would like to start this article by quoting Grosvenor's own description of the purpose of the Management Scheme approved by the High Court:

"In terms of townscape and architectural quality, the long term ownership and stewardship of Belgravia by Grosvenor has had a profound affect on the way in which it was developed. There was and still remains a unity of design and, although the style was changed in response to the dictates of taste, as time passed, the layout of terraces, squares and crescents is remarkably consistent with the original designs. Belgravia remains one of the finest examples of Regency architecture in Europe".

This does not in any way describe the proposed development for the Cundy

...the moral imperative is I am prepared to accept somewhere else to live rather than interrupt the unity of design...

Street site. There are five buildings in excess of 30m, which was the old fixed maximum height agreeable to Westminster City Council. One building is 42m in height, almost on a level with the top of the church spire of St Barnabas Church.

Grosvenor justifies itself by pointing out how many new homes will be on the site. However, that is not a proper justification when you consider all the other development included. We are told that new shops and amenities, including a small foodstore, restaurants and drinking establishments, will be provided, together with other things like cinema and community space. This is no more than an attempt to insert large commercial development into an area already fully serviced.

However, having carefully looked at the documentation, it is apparent that almost 45% of the floor space is actually for senior living. That leaves us with a moral dilemma. Are we prepared to pay the price of long-term overshadowing of existing homes, the loss of the unique architectural value of an area described as the finest example of Georgian architecture for accepting the additional 18,345 m² of floor space (197,463 ft²) for senior living?

I ask myself, would it not be possible to find somewhere in Westminster offering this sort of square footage without causing the kind of damage that these buildings would inflict? We are confident that there will be many commercial premises, some very centrally placed, where that sort of area would be available and provide wonderful accommodation for senior living.

Speaking as someone in the age group (belonging in the appropriate tier for vaccination), that is the dilemma that affects me. I think the moral imperative is I am prepared to accept somewhere else to live rather than interrupt the unity of design of the wonderful architecture of Belgravia. That will leave the generations to come able to see that which I have enjoyed during my residence here.

We are not sure when the planning application will be heard; it may be as early as mid-February. WCC has sent out a notification relating to the application again and you can still object to it or, indeed, support it. The application number is 20/03307/full. ●



Invitation to the next Belgravia Society committee meeting

We would be delighted for you to join our video meeting. Please let us know by email if you wish to be linked in: info@thebelgraviasociety.com

We can only accept a limited number, so first come, first served.

**Our next video meeting is
9th February 2021**



TIME FLIES

In our December 2019 Magazine we published an article about time and the changes in calendars and how the earliest calendars were calculated. It was the Egyptians who first worked out that there were 365 days in the year. They missed the fact that that was a little inaccurate and that every four years they needed to put in an extra day.

That is how the Julian calendar came to be replaced by the Gregorian calendar which took account of the leap days. If you read the article, you will remember the Julian calendar was ten days behind the Gregorian calendar and it had taken some 1500 years since Julius Caesar had ordered the adoption of the calendar bearing his name. The Gregorian calendar was adopted and has become the universal international calendar, although many countries and religious institutions still have traditional calendars as well.

Since the advent of atomic clocks, which are accurate and can calculate the rotation of the Earth in milliseconds, any changes can be readily observed. The international Earth Rotations Systems Service, which monitors the Earth's rotation, had announced in 2019 that there would be no second leap second and the next possible date was to be June 2020. The changes to the standard day length had only been discovered when the highly accurate atomic clocks were developed in the 1960s using fixed stars in the sky.

Over the last few decades, since the advent of the atomic clocks, the speed of the Earth's rotations has been consistently decreasing and 27 "leap seconds" have been added to keep the time accurate with the spinning of the Earth. The last one was added on New Year's Eve 2016. Even BT's speaking clock added a second's pause before an extra pip at the 1am bulletin.

Now it seems that the Earth has been spinning unusually quickly and this year the speeding up of the Earth's rotation is likely to continue to increase. There is therefore the likelihood of a leap second being inserted in the near future. It may not seem really relevant as the accuracy of clocks, whether they be mechanical or electronic, will never be as accurate as an atomic clock and the difference of one second to be noticed would take hundreds of years, if not thousands.

However, at the time of a previous leap second in 2012, several well-known platforms crashed and there were problems with the Linux Operating systems and programs written in Java. Despite the fact the atomic clocks would then be out of sync with the Earth's rotation, and it would sever connection with solar time, abolishing the concept of leap seconds is being considered. We understand that the World Radio Communication Conference will take place in 2023 when the future of the leap second will be decided. So watch your clocks and watches for the change! ●



PARTY WALL MATTERS

by Helene Oratore



Helene Oratore

I write both from the perspective of someone who has served party wall notices and who has had them served on me. Do not be fooled into thinking that it is only basement excavations that cause massive problems for neighbours. This article reflects the approach, method and outcome of two different home owners who used the same legal regulations and similar party wall agreements when they embarked upon alterations to their roof areas.

The two properties are within yards of each other, both are now six floors high and of a similar value.

The first risk adverse owner expended nearly £100,000 on professional fees, outside scaffolding, hoists, winches, a covered roof platform and over 200 pieces of scaffolding in the top floor to brace the entire building and terrace while the roof was altered and extended. The outcome was that no cracks appeared on neighbouring properties, the 16 chimney stacks and pots survived completely undamaged and the tallest 3 metre Georgian chimney stack moved less than 1mm.

The second owner lived abroad and hired an overseas team. Planning consent was sought for some alterations but not to add an entire new top floor. This detail had been left to the creation of the construction firm. Neighbours soon realised that an additional storey was being erected on the 1815 terraced property without planning consent, without party wall agreements and without any regard to the laws of physics.

The front façade started to bow and masonry started to fall away from the house. Westminster and Grosvenor were notified immediately and, to their credit, both arrived within the hour to halt the work. Enforcement notices were issued and the site was closed until a plan had been agreed as to how the façade could be stabilised.

...Neighbours soon realised that an additional storey was being erected on the 1815 terraced property without planning consent, without party wall agreements and without any regard to the laws of physics.

The owner appointed a new construction team, architect and structural engineer specialising in listed buildings. The project proceeded slowly but without any further incidents. Had neighbours not intervened, the end result might have been similar to the disasters recorded in Chester Row and Durham Place.

Owners or developers may be tempted to take financial shortcuts and ignore professional advice. Large projects can NEVER be left to builders to 'be creative' and 'wing it'. So although one might expect a satisfactory outcome, it really does depend on the willingness of the parties to comply with planning consent, robustly worded party wall agreements, monitoring and enforcement procedures. ●



Joe Briggs

LOCAL STREET NAMES PART ONE

by Joe Briggs

Residents of Belgravia will be familiar with the following Grosvenor street name connections: Grosvenor Place, Grosvenor Gardens and Grosvenor Crescent, etc., the list of “Eaton” street names, after Eaton Hall, the Grosvenor country house in Cheshire; “Chester” street names, after Chester, the main city in Cheshire; and “Wilton” street names, after Wilton House in Wiltshire, the country house of the 1st Earl of Wilton, whose daughter married Robert Grosvenor, 1st Marquess of Westminster. There is Elizabeth Street, named after Elizabeth Leveson-Gower, the wife of Richard Grosvenor, 2nd Marquess of Westminster and, of course, there is Belgravia itself, after Belgrave, a village near Eaton Hall.

But the connections do not stop there. The Grosvenors owned Cliveden House in Buckinghamshire for a short period from 1868 to 1893, which explains why the road connecting Eaton Square to Sloane Square is called Cliveden Place. They own Halkyn Castle in Wales (just across the border from Chester), which gives us Halkin Street. They own land in the village of Motcombe in Devon, the village of Eccleston in Cheshire, and the villages of Minera as well as Lower and Higher Kinnerton in Wales, hence the whole raft of local street names.

While there is Cundy Street, named after the Grosvenor's property surveyor, Thomas Cundy, there is no street name recognising Thomas Cubitt, the Grosvenor's master builder, who has to make do with a pub on Elizabeth Street. Similarly, there is Burton Street, named after the famous 19th century architect, Decimus Burton, but there is no street name recognising George Basevi, the Grosvenor's architect, who has to make do with a small bust in Belgrave Square.

In neighbouring Pimlico it seems the Grosvenors may have run out of relevant historic family references when they developed the area, hence the use of some big cathedral city names in Chichester Street, Gloucester Street and Winchester Street, and famous historic counties reflected in Sussex Street, Sutherland Street and Cumberland Street.

There is one major exception in the form of Lupus Street in Pimlico, which is perhaps the most original of all the Grosvenor place names. Hugh Lupus Grosvenor, 1st Duke of Westminster, got his middle name from the original Grosvenor, Hugh d'Avranches, 2nd Earl of Chester, who was the 'Grand Veneur' (or 'Master Huntsman') during the time of William the Conqueror. He apparently had two nicknames – the 'gros-veneur' (or 'fat-huntsman') and the 'lupus' (or 'wolf'), owing to his greed and his ruthlessness.

The etymology in local place names, and the recycling and reinvention of history that goes with it, is fascinating and I would be thrilled to hear about your favourite local examples if you wish to get in touch. ●

Contact Joe Briggs via email at:
jra.briggs@outlook.com



**NOW PUBLISHES
A WEEKLY
NEWSLETTER**

Age UK Westminster Weekly Newsletter offers a flavour of what is free, accessible and available to everyone who wants to get creative this month. Age UK research shows that older people across the UK value the impact that creativity has on their own sense of wellbeing and, in the current situation, this is even more important.

Please share with your networks and colleagues. If you would like to feature an opportunity or photo from your own project, then do get in touch – we'd love to hear from you at enquiries@acwestminster.org.uk.

Currently activities are held via ZOOM. You will need to install ZOOM on your device and then you will receive an email giving instructions on how to join the Activity. If you need any help, please contact the enquiry line, and instructions on ZOOM video installation is available on the Age UK Westminster website: www.ageuk.org.uk/westminster.

If you have ideas of other activities you may like to attend that we don't currently provide, please do contact us. We continue to provide Advice and Information and Telephone Befriending if you would like a friendly chat.

The Age UK Westminster Advice and Information and enquiry line is available Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm
020 3004 5610

STAMP DUTY



by John O'Connell
CEO of the TaxPayers' Alliance



The Budget is looming, and the recent government reports have been rife about tax rises Rishi Sunak may implement. An area of debate has been whether the Chancellor will extend the stamp duty holiday, with the first £500,000 of the price of a house purchase exempt until 31st March. Stamp duty adds another costly barrier to the already expensive process of moving home. Economic analysis repeatedly shows that it harms productivity, impacting decisions such as whether or not to take a new job or downsize. Simply put, stamp duty is a destructive tax.

The TaxPayers' Alliance has long campaigned for it to be scrapped, launching our *Stamp Out Stamp Duty* campaign back in 2013. We haven't been alone: a broad coalition of think tanks, politicians, newspapers, campaigners and journalists have joined us to denounce what is perhaps the worst tax in our tax system.

Scrapping it would be the best solution, but, practically speaking, the battle at this Budget is more granular – hopefully a small step in the right direction.

We launched a petition for the government to make the stamp duty 'holiday' permanent. This would mean people buying a house pay nothing in stamp duty on the first £500,000. Doing so would release the pent-up demand in the housing market. Barratt Developments alone sold almost a thousand more homes in the six months to 31st December than in 2019.

Meanwhile, the holiday has caused a COVID-induced backlog which could see thousands of potential homeowners miss out if sales aren't completed by the March deadline. Making the stamp duty holiday permanent would resolve both of these issues and, according to our own recent research, unlock up to 216,000 transactions, equivalent to the total housing stock in the city of Manchester.

The stories behind the numbers are perhaps more important. We have to remember that easing the stamp duty burden will mean that a family can buy their first home and start to build roots; or perhaps they can be closer to their relatives so that families can stay connected. It will mean that someone can move for their dream job. It can mean that couples who have grown-up children can move to a smaller place and enjoy their retirement. The economics are clear, but we need to tell these stories too, so the government can take a step in the right direction towards abolishing stamp duty. ●



NEWS FROM GROSVENOR'S DIRECTOR FOR BELGRAVIA, PAUL O'GRADY

wanted to let you know what we at Grosvenor are doing in light of the latest lockdown.

Regarding our local businesses, we rolled out a new package of support to retail and hospitality tenants in Belgravia. In recognition of the difficulties they will face in the first three months of 2021, we have now offered many of our small independent operators who have been forced to shut a 50% discount on their rent across January, February and March. This is a continuation of our approach to focus support where it can be most effective and is on top of the rent waived in Q2 and Q4 2020. Our ability to back smaller businesses still relies on the principle that well-capitalised tenants, and those able to trade, continue to pay their rent. However, as you know we are open to conversations around further rental support with any tenant in acute financial distress.

We are also upping our marketing efforts, in the short term, supporting businesses who are trading or moving online, whilst preparing an ambitious bounce back plan in conjunction with our tenants to get Belgravia back on track once the vaccination programme has taken effect and restrictions ease. I should add that throughout this uncertainty we remain



committed to our stretching sustainability goals, particularly net zero carbon and zero waste, and we continue to encourage tenants to take up green leases and help us build back better together.

Secondly, in terms of community support, Simon Mantle has restarted the online tea breaks on Tuesdays and Thursdays with Fr Alan. Also, our team on the ground are supporting vulnerable residents we are aware of. Of course, if you are aware of any other people or initiatives in need of our support, please let us know and we will do our best to help.

In the meantime, I hope you keep well and please get in touch if you have any questions. ●

NEWS FROM WARD COUNCILLORS



*Elizabeth
Hitchcock*



*Rachael
Robathan*



*Tony
Devenish*

KNIGHTSBRIDGE & BELGRAVIA AND WARWICK WARDS



*Christabel
Flight*



*Jacqui
Wilkinson*



Nikki Aiken

A great amount of local news relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. Westminster City Council has been doing amazing work for the community and local Councillors have been assisting in every way possible. Their contact details are on page 22 and they want you to know they are all there to provide support as your circumstances change. They provide the following information for you.

Both testing and vaccination centres are crucial in our fight against COVID. Westminster offers two types of testing for people with and without symptoms.

Those close to our local wards are for those:

WITHOUT SYMPTOMS:

These testing sites are open without appointment every day:
Westminster Cathedral Hall, Ambrosden Avenue SW1P 1QH –10am-4pm

WITH SYMPTOMS:

(a new persistent cough, high temperature or a loss or change in sense of smell or taste) appointments are available at these semi-permanent, walk-through testing centres in Westminster: Grosvenor Hall, Vincent Street SW1P 4HB

They are open seven days a week, from 8am to 8pm. They can be used by anyone with symptoms or who has been asked to get a test. A test must be booked in advance at NHS Online or by calling 119. Other centres in Westminster are also available.

The mass vaccination programme, the biggest ever undertaken by this country, is underway. In Westminster, the Community Vaccination Centres at Lord's and Vincent Square opened recently to elderly residents. These are not walk-in facilities; patients need to be registered with a local GP and have an NHS number to qualify. They will be advised by their GP and North West London CCG when to turn up for their vaccination.

This first stage of the vaccination programme is on track for the top four priority groups – care home residents and staff, residents 80 and over, plus health and social care workers, those 75 to 79 and finally those 70 to 74, plus clinically extremely vulnerable individuals – but not including pregnant women and those under 16 years of age – to receive their first dose of the vaccine by mid-February. Find out more on the Council's website.

Westminster Council is helping businesses comply with safety against COVID-19 and taking enforcement when there is flagrant failure to stick to the rules. Council Officers are visiting supermarkets and corner shops all around Westminster to make sure businesses are helping to ensure social distancing and mask wearing within their premises.

One example: Thanks to local people reporting to our 24-hour noise team that large numbers were entering a premises via fire escapes plus music being played, enforcement action was taken. Working with the police, over 150 people were found inside drinking, smoking and not social distancing. People were fined, including a £10,000 fine for the DJ who also had his equipment confiscated. A three-month closure order has now been placed on these premises to prevent any repeat.

Westminster Council is taking enforcement when there is flagrant failure to stick to the rules.

If you're unsure whether a Westminster business is following the government's regulations, you can contact the Council's Premises Enquiry Line on 020 7641 4747 (9am-5pm, Monday-Friday) or by **email**.

With so many young people, like their parents, working from home, it has been vital to ensure that every child has access to a laptop or tablet in their home to allow for them to continue to study. Westminster City Council is among the leading councils nationwide in delivering digital devices for young people.

Working with partners including the Young Westminster Foundation and Vodafone, we have provided over 1,800 devices to young people in need of support on top of over 2,000 new devices provided by government direct to schools, for a total of nearly 4,000 – more than any other London council we are aware of. Where needed, we have also looked to provide wireless broadband connections too. Westminster has the lowest attainment gap between the richest and most deprived children of any local authority in England. ●



ROUGH SLEEPING

We have considered the issue of rough sleeping before. We are especially concerned regarding the campsite on Park Lane. WCC inspectors have been busy clearing the long-term encampment following its abandonment. This has been achieved by work involving outreach for rough sleepers, the police and waste services contractor. The people there have been offered accommodation or repatriation and many have refused.

The law remains that the council and police have limited powers for the removal of tents if they are occupied. Now, TfL (which we understand has control of the area) is trying to get an injunction which would give WCC

more powers to stop camping or sleeping there.

When temperatures are zero, emergency accommodation is offered to those sleeping in the streets. 124 were offered over the second weekend in January and over 80 individuals accepted that offer. Already 39 of those housed in emergency accommodation have begun a long-term pathway to get accommodation, resettlement or work opportunities, which adds to the many already being assisted to ensure long-term solutions for them.

Now that we have left the EU, we must wait and see whether the new entry provisions for non-UK citizens will help ensure that the professional beggars who also rough-sleep do not come. ●

SCAMS AWARENESS



information from
**Westminster
City Council**

**Anyone can be a
victim of scams.
Criminals will
exploit everybody,
so it is important to
be on the alert.**

More than ever it is crucial for everyone to be aware of scams. Criminals around the world are targeting our friends, family and communities with scams. As the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is felt globally, Westminster Trading Standards and the police have seen an increase in reports of victims.

Whether it's telephone calls from people claiming to be from HMRC regarding outstanding tax; emails allegedly from your bank stating there is a problem with your account; text messages allegedly from the NHS offering COVID-19 vaccines for a fee; fake websites selling PPE; doorstep callers offering supposedly bargain priced home improvements; or letters from clairvoyants predicting good health or wealth, the scammers' aim is to con you and get access to your money or personal details.

Learn how to protect yourself and others from scams by visiting **www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk**.

Westminster Trading Standards has produced a booklet on scams. To request a copy call 020 7641 1111

If you have been targeted by a scam, please report it to Action Fraud, the police national fraud reporting centre at **www.actionfraud.police.uk**
Tel: 0300 123 2040

If you need advice about scams or your consumer rights, contact the national Citizens Advice Consumer Service: **www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer**
Tel: 0808 223 1133



COUNCILLORS' SURGERIES AND CONTACT DETAILS

KNIGHTSBRIDGE & BELGRAVIA WARD

Cllr Rachel Robathan (Con)	leader@westminster.gov.uk
Cllr Tony Devenish (Con)	tony.devenish@london.gov.uk
Cllr Elizabeth Hitchcock (Con)	ehitchcock@westminster.gov.uk
Tel no for all	020 7641 3411

Surgeries by telephone only for the time being. Please telephone 020 7641 3411.

WARWICK WARD

Cllr Christabel Flight (Con)	cflight@westminster.gov.uk
Cllr Nickie Aiken (Con)	nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk
Cllr Jacqui Wilkinson (Con)	jwilkinson@westminster.gov.uk
Tel no for Cllr Aiken	020 7641 3255
Tel no for Cllrs Flight and Wilkinson	020 7641 3411

Surgeries by telephone only until further notice. For the time being, please use telephone number 020 7641 5377.

CHURCHILL WARD

Cllr Murad Gassanly (Con)	mgassanly@westminster.gov.uk
Tel no	020 7641 5377

If you require help and/or support with a problem, email Councillor Gassanly or call at the above telephone number. Councillor Gassanly's monthly drop-in advice surgeries (City of Westminster Housing South Area Advice Centre, 137 Lupus Street, London SW1V 3HE) are currently on hold. Call or email for information.

Cllr Andrea Mann (Lab)	amann@westminster.gov.uk
Cllr Shamim Talukder (Lab)	stalukder@westminster.gov.uk
Tel no	020 7641 4299

Surgeries, usually held on the second Thursday of the month, 7-8pm, are currently on hold. Please call or email for updates.

Postal address for all Councillors:	Westminster City Hall 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP
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Registered Charity No: 1168619
An amenity society recognised by the City of Westminster

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership is open to residents and non-residents and is free

Name email

Second name (if any) email

Address.....

.....

Telephone: Home..... Work

Mobile Date

By signing this Application I CONSENT and AGREE to The Belgravia Society sending emails to me until I unsubscribe or resign from the Society.

Signature(s):

Please let us know if you have any special interests, concerns or queries:

PLEASE RETURN THIS APPLICATION FORM TO THE PERSON WHO GAVE IT TO YOU OR EMAIL TO: info@thebelgraviasociety.com
OR POST TO: **63 BELGRAVIA COURT 33 EBURY STREET LONDON SW1W 0NY**

Gift Aid declaration – for past, present and future

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts made:

Please tick all boxes you wish to apply.

☐ Today ☐ In the past 4 years ☐ In the future



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Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate. Gift Aid is reclaimed by the Charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year.

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

SIGNATURE(S) DATE

ADDRESS

Please notify the charity or CASC if you:

☐ Want to cancel this declaration ☐ Change your name or home address ☐ No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

PLEASE EMAIL THIS APPLICATION FORM TO: info@thebelgraviasociety.com
OR POST TO: **63 BELGRAVIA COURT 33 EBURY STREET LONDON SW1W 0NY**



THE BELGRAVIA SOCIETY MAGAZINE

The only independent voice for Belgravia

NUMBER 68
JANUARY 2021



REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 1168619
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