



Registered Charity No: 1168619 Patron: Lord Fellowes of West Stafford DL

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

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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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# **Chairman's Mess**



**George Waite** Chairman of The Belgravia Society and ESRA



#### **Dockless e-bikes**

s we have previously reported, dockless bikes too often end up dumped, obstructing our pavements.

One of our neighbouring amenity societies, South East Bayswater Residents Association (SEBRA), recently raised a number of questions with Westminster City Council (WCC). Their argument, highlights of which I repeat below, is very well made: that with the introduction of e-bikes by Transport for London (TfL) and the expectation that all rental bikes be parked in designated areas, the value proposition of Lime and other dockless bike sharing services becomes guestionable, that is to say, there is no value, if not negative:

- The hire companies are essentially 'privatising' profits and socialising losses' by shifting the burden of bad parking to local residents and to the Council.
- The dockless bikes are very easy to 'jump start' attracting anti-social behaviour and criminal elements.

WCC were then asked to clarify a number of questions:

Q: How many high paying quality jobs, if any, are created by Lime or other e-Bike hire companies within Westminster?

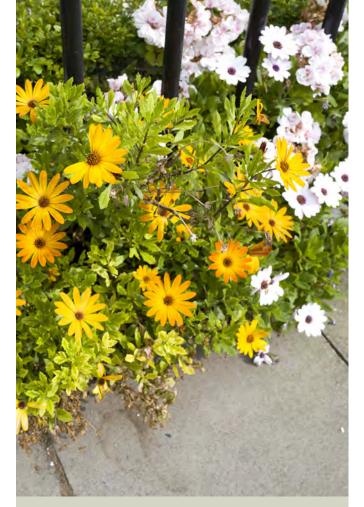
WCC reply: Two two-year fixed-term Council officers (my emphasis) are in the process of being hired.

Q: Why does the Council effectively subsidise a private enterprise by allowing them to dump bikes wherever they like? We should force the hire companies to bring their service in line with TfL bikes and if they can't compete with TfL, they should close the shop.

WCC reply: In the absence of relevant legislations or working agreements, unauthorised e-bike companies (my emphasis) continue to operate their scheme in Westminster and other parts of London. The current trial provides mandatory parking locations and offers better control over the previous "free floating" model where users can end their rides without any restrictions. Under the contract, any non-compliant rides left outside of the mandatory parking locations will face warnings and fines.

Whilst these are only two of the questions raised (the full exchange can be found at www. **sebra.org.uk**), they highlight, in my opinion:

- (a) the need for WCC to avoid a conflict of interest and
- (b) the situation is out of control: [in WCC's words] 'there is an absence of relevant legislations and working agreements'... 'no specific legislation relating to the presence of dockless bikes on our streets'...'dockless bikes operate across London under various Memorandum of Understanding and Contracts, and therefore any regulation or licensing would need to take this into account' ... 'There is no legislation available to Westminster that would allow us to licence the activity or operations relating to dockless bikes'... 'Terminating the contract will result in the operating companies reverting back to the pre-trial, "free floating" operating model and non-users, especially the vulnerable pedestrian, will be affected by a high number of randomly parked bikes (my emphasis)'.



# A strange month...

BY MARY REGNIER-LEIGH

our Editor has found this month unusual. It is not so much that there has been a lot of news to choose from, it has been the overwhelming news of the general election and the international football.

After careful consideration, your Editor decided not to use either of these well worn news stories and our preferred look has been at some of the wonderful things that go on either in Belgravia or next to us.

Accordingly, we offer June Magazine as a reflection of unique life locally here in Belgravia and in the pageantry, parks and gardens which are so close to us.



Registered Chairty No. 1168619

# Building a strong community

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

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# www.thebelgraviasociety.com/online-membership-form

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

Alternatively, print the application form on page 19 and post your completed form to

63 Belgravia Court 33 Ebury Street London SW1W 0NY



# nature

**BY SARA OLIVER** 

huge thank you to all those who took part (or encouraged others to) in #NoMowMay by letting gardens, local community, school or office spaces run a bit wild. We know the Royal Parks and Grosvenor did. This is a real boost for wildlife, helping tackle pollution, reduce urban heat extremes and locking atmospheric carbon below ground.

#### **Blooming June**

June is a great month for letting the wildflowers bloom whether it be on an office balcony, a window box, or a quiet corner of a school playground; anywhere where there are barren spaces to fill. A wildlife mini habitat\* is a great way to create a sanctuary for insects on their way to the next London park or square, thus creating a lifeline and a wildlife corridor. So please don't stop at #NoMowMay, join in on 'Blooming June' by planting beautiful wildflowers and allow nature a chance to recover.

#### **Restoring nature**

I read recently that the lowly worm is in peril with a 98% serious decline. It is obviously linked to habitat loss and soil erosion especially in the countryside where relentless new builds are being constructed in our beautiful green fields and meadows.

A case in point: in our own small and truly rural village, we are currently fighting to prevent a large number of unnecessary houses being built in a meadow. If this development is granted, it will have a devastating effect on local wildlife, butterflies, insects, rare newts, rare bat populations (we have 11 out of 18 rare bat species in our village), flora, fauna (we also have hedgehogs in our gardens), and will fundamentally change the nature of a small haven for wildlife in an "area of outstanding natural beauty" in the Cotswolds. Unnecessary and unwanted, this case has been thrown out by our local council many times over several years; still the developers persist in trying to overturn the decision and impose their agenda upon this beautiful place. We shall just keep saying no, No, NO!

This is an example of what is happening up and down our lovely country and not just in urban areas. Development has gone into overdrive and our wildlife and nature suffers as a result.

On 22nd June there was a march through the streets of London for the restoration of nature. The importance of speaking up for nature and the need to protect wild plants and fungi cannot be stressed enough. Wildlife and climate campaigners urged all political parties to take action to 'Restore Nature Now' by:

- Delivering more space for nature
- Putting a right to a healthy environment in law
- · Ensuring fair and effective climate action.

Finally, if you are in the mood and want to lift spirits, do take a look at the Royal Parks' wonderful voluntary restore nature program for June. The rewards reaped by helping out is worth it.

#### Sources:

plantlife.org.uk \*theroyalparks.org.uk \*bioscapes.co.uk



# **Trooping the Colour 2024**

Trooping the Colour this year seemed to have a special importance. With our King and the Princess of Wales both battling cancer, would either or both be present?

We did not know.

he colourful spectacle remains an annual celebration of the Sovereign's official birthday. The Guards are amongst the oldest regiments of the British Army and have served as the personal bodyguards of the Sovereign since the monarchy was restored after the Civil War in 1660.

The ceremony of Trooping the Colour is believed to have been performed first during the reign of King Charles II (1660-1685). In 1748, it was decided that this parade would be used to mark the official birthday of the Sovereign and it became an annual event after George III became King in 1760. Different regiments of Guards Troop their Colour each year.

This is the origin of the word 'trooping'. So, it is a great tradition that began life as a vital and practical parade designed to aid unit recognition before a battle commenced. The principal role of a regiment's colours was to provide a rallying point on the battlefield. For troops to know what their Regiment's colours looked like, it was necessary to display them regularly. The way in which this was done was for young officers to march in between the ranks of troops formed in lines with the Colours held high.

The Colours trooped today are of the five Regiments of Foot Guards, whose regiments take it in turns. This year, the Regiment



whose Colour was trooped was that of the Irish Guards. Next year is the 375th anniversary of the Coldstream Guards so they will troop their Colour and there are also plans to re-enact General Monck's March from Coldstream - one for the historians!

The Trooping the Colour parade this year was somewhat poignant given the cancer affecting both the King and the Princess of Wales. While the King had been able to fulfil a number of public engagements, the Princess of Wales had not and we had not seen her since Christmas. We can only record our delight at

seeing both of them present with the children at Trooping the Colour.

Councillor Rachael Robathan and her husband were present and have told us that a close friend of their son was the Ensign for Trooping the Colour this year. Their son Kit is third generation in the Coldstream Guards, and looks forward to taking part in next year's Trooping the Colour.

Councillor Robathan tells us that the rain held off until about ten minutes before the end. when the skies opened with rain of biblical proportions. Many of the guardsmen's tunics would have been ruined and a huge amount of extra work to dry and clean the horses' tack would be necessary. Guests are always discouraged from putting up umbrellas but as the Royal family were leaving in their carriages the umbrellas shot up. Councillor Robathan also says the presence of the Princess of Wales, who looked sensational and very happy, gave everyone a boost.

After Trooping the Colour was over, the Royal family appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace. Thankfully, it had stopped raining. The crowds filled the area around the Victoria Memorial and the Mall and were delighted to see the Princess of Wales looking so wonderful with the King and the rest of the Royal family.

The customary fly-past took place, and your Editor managed to get a really great view of the Red Arrows. We look forward to next year.







# News on the Guards and horses injured in April

A number of our readers have particularly asked for news on the soldiers and horses injured after running loose through London on 24th April.

e were delighted to hear from the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment (HCMR) Life Guards soldiers that the five Military Working Horses (MWH) injured are continuing to make remarkable progress in their recovery.

Three of the horses injured in the incident are now back on duty and, against all expectations, Tennyson took part in the King's Birthday Parade on 15th June. Trojan and Vanquish are back on duty providing ceremonial guard for the official entrance to the Royal Palaces. The remaining two are recuperating in the country but look set to return to work in due course.

Three of the injured soldiers are back on duty and two are continuing to convalesce but are also expected to make a full return to service.

For the horses, this remarkable recovery is thanks in no small part to the excellent in-house care they've received from the Army's own dedicated veterinary surgeons and the amazing specialist support provided by The Horse Trust.

Readers will remember the Life Guards were on their daily morning exercise ride when their horses were spooked by construction rubble being dropped through a plastic tunnel from a height close to them here in Belgravia.



Dreadful day: two of the Cavalry horses running loose through London on 24th April

Media images of two of the horses, Cavalry Black Trojan and Cavalry Grey Vida, running loose, covered in blood, through the streets of London, were broadcast worldwide. The horses had been put under constant supervision by the Army's expert veterinary surgeons. Trojan, Tennyson, and Vanquish were found to be fit to return to London and were collected by HCMR soldiers on 29th May. All three are now back on duty.

The Horse Trust understands the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle for animals to prevent sickness and injury. Returning to work can help facilitate this lifestyle for the horses, ensuring they remain fit, healthy and enjoy long and fulfilling lives.

Vida and Quaker have made a remarkable physical recovery and showed great enthusiasm and joy upon their arrival at The Horse Trust, galloping into fresh pastures. Vida, the Cavalry Grey, wasted no time in turning from white to brown as he rolled in the grass. The horses appeared bright and in good spirits, clearly displaying a close bond with each other and the soldiers who accompanied them. The horses will remain with The Horse Trust for as long as they need before being assessed for their suitability to return to work.

We are told that both the Army and The Horse Trust have been overwhelmed by the amount of public care and interest in the recovery of the soldiers and horses affected by the incident on 24th April, and would like to thank everyone that expressed their concern and best wishes for a speedy recovery – they look to have been granted!

#### **INVITATION TO THE NEXT SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING**

We would be delighted for you to join our next meeting in person on

9th July at 5.30pm at The Caledonian Club

Please let us know if you wish to attend by emailing info@thebelgraviasociety.com.





If you have a CAF account, it is an easy way to donate to the Society. Please do help us to maintain our work for Belgravia and our community magazine.

#### Wanted!

Writers | Historians | Storytellers

#### DO YOU ENJOY WRITING?

We would be delighted to receive articles and short stories about Belgravia / our neighbours / London and beyond – all voluntary, of course. Discuss your ideas with us at info@belgraviasociety.com



e are told by Simon Mantle of Grosvenor:

"This year Grosvenor has restructured the Belgrave Square Garden membership pricing to incorporate a simplified format of membership: A one fob membership at £500 allows a single household one fob. These costs are still competitive and in line with other estates. This will allow us to continue to make improvements within the garden.

All garden members will be issued with new fobs. We are aware that there are currently fobs in circulation and in use and possession of those not eligible for access to the garden. All previous/existing fobs will be deactivated during the renewal process to ensure only those eligible will have access to the garden. The option of the one fob membership is our preferred option for members although appreciate additional fobs may be required. The additional cost to have a two fob or multi fob membership allows single households to have more than one fob for a premium and we hope will deter garden members passing fobs onto third parties (this will be monitored).

Dog membership costs have historically been low in relation to the true costs in lawn management and waste recovery. We are this year re-introducing dog tags and increasing spot checks to ensure only registered dogs are accessing the garden and to ensure rules are followed."

We were somewhat stunned by the hike in price, however, we do recognise other gardens have similar prices. We also note that the use of fobs has been exploited in that they have been lent to people who either did not want to pay for membership, or who were ineligible for membership of the garden. We are also assured that more facilities will be available and it is hoped that there will be a warden to make sure the rules are obeyed.

There is no doubt that this is a very beautiful garden. Although some of us have our reservations about the meadow areas, this is a delightful place to walk in and sit and contemplate.

We have taken some photographs in the Square of wicker men. They have been saved from Belgravia in Bloom for us to enjoy.



# State Visit of the Emperor Empress of Japan

The State dinner saw the first showing of the King's new Family Order; the Queen Consort wore the diamond-encased miniature portrait worn by female royals to signify their importance within the family.

he Emperor of Japan has long links with the British Royal Family, and was previously hosted by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip at Balmoral where he was taught to fly fish by the young Prince Charles. The State visit was initially planned to take place in Spring 2020, but was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The State visit began on Tuesday 25th June, when the Emperor and Empress were met by The King and Queen on Horse Guards and the Emperor was invited to inspect a Guard of Honour formed of the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards.

At the end of the welcome ceremony was the traditional carriage procession to Buckingham Palace where a private lunch was held. In the afternoon, the Emperor and Empress viewed a special exhibition in the Picture Gallery of items from the Royal Collection relating to Japan.

In the evening the King hosted a State banquet for the Emperor. Golden cutlery and a menu including poached Scottish langoustines and Cornish turbot welcomed 170 guests in the ballroom. Dessert was ice cream with a peach sorbet insert on compressed peaches. Among the guests were Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer, Lib Dem leader Sir Ed Davey and the Governor of the Bank of England, as well as Prince William and Prince Edward. A string quartet from the Royal College of Music performed.

The King said in his speech, "Our governments are working together to provide a stable world for future generations. Supporting all these shared endeavours are the enduring ties between our people that transcend geography – and that does not just mean how much we enjoy tea and talking about the weather!", the King joked.



e were pleased to be invited again to the annual celebration of St Barnabas Day by St Barnabas School at Orange Square. The weather was good and happily the rain forecast did not arrive.

The children performed traditional folk dances around a maypole. They were obviously enjoying this as much as the visitors. The school, well known for its music teaching, provided music and especially violin performances by the young performers. Many parents were present as well.

Also in attendance to enjoy the day were our new Lord Mayor, Councillor Robert Rigby, and our three Councillors Rachael Robathan, Elizabeth Hitchcock and Tony Devenish.

St Barnabas School, originally known as St Barnabas College, was completed in 1847 on land specifically given by the Duke of Westminster in perpetuity for the education of the poor. The school acted temporarily as the parish church, until the church itself was completed on adjacent land three years later. The buildings were funded by voluntary contributions from the inhabitants of the adjoining areas. When built, with an allowance of 6ft per child, the school building could accommodate 582 children, at a cost of 1d per week.

Apart from its well-known musical teaching, it also teaches Latin. Many schools adopt this and The Latin Programme is a small education charity working with primary state schools across London to embed high-quality, inventive Latin lessons into the curriculum. The lessons are about more than just Latin, the programme is built to support English literacy, encourage creativity in the classroom, and provide opportunities to explore the many ways that the ancient Romans continue to influence our modern world.

St Barnabas School also has strong partnerships with a number of different community organisations. This includes Grosvenor Estate, London Music Masters, The Latin Programme, a football club, cricket club and other charities supporting the community. Children have a wide opportunity to learn about so many things that will enable them to be aware of the rest of the community around them. We can only congratulate the School, its Head and teachers, the wonderful children, as well as the church that supports them. We look forward to next year.



# Stop by the Serpentine to see this year's pavilion

racing the history of past Serpentine Pavilions, Minsuk Cho observed that they often emerge as a singular structure situated at the centre of the Serpentine South lawn. To explore new possibilities and previously untold spatial narratives. Cho approaches the centre as an open space. The 23rd Serpentine Pavilion envisions a unique void surrounded by a constellation of smaller, adaptable structures strategically positioned at the periphery of the lawn.

Titled Archipelagic Void, the Pavilion is composed of five 'islands', each structure unique in size, height and form. Built predominantly in timber, these structures are supported by identical footings that adapt to the slightly sloping topography of the site. The curving edges of the individual roofs are conjoined by a steel ring which forms an oculus in the centre that draws natural light. Radiating from the circular void, these islands act as nodes in the lawn, reaching out to connect to the Serpentine South Gallery and the pedestrian networks in the park. This layout also references traditional Korean houses that feature a madang, an open courtyard located at the centre. This space connects to various residential guarters, accommodating individual everyday activities and larger collective rituals throughout the changing seasons.

Around the void, each structure is conceived as a 'content machine', serving a different purpose and individually named. The Gallery hosts a six-channel sound installation created by musician and composer Jang Young-Gyu. The work incorporates sounds from nature and human activities recorded in the Kensington Gardens with traditional Korean vocal music and instruments to depict the transition of seasons.

As usual, it is heavily sponsored. This year's Pavilion seems to be well worth visiting.



# Green Park

Here in central London we are enormously privileged to have so many open spaces and parks around us. Green Park is the smallest of the Royal Parks in central London.

#### BY MARY REGNIER-LEIGH

reen Park covers 40 acres, linking St James's Park and Hyde Park in a chain of Royal Parks. In 1660, King Charles II wanted to be able to walk all the way from Hyde Park to St James's Park without leaving royal soil. So, he acquired land between the two established parks, put a brick wall around it and gave Green Park its first name: Upper St James's Park.

King Charles II used the park for entertaining visitors. The fireworks displays are said to have been spectacular. He also commissioned one of the first ice houses in Britain so in the

summer his guests could receive cold drinks. He also often took his own constitutional there often accompanied by his pet spaniels.

The Park continued to be a park for royalty until it opened to the public in 1826. In the 1820s, John Nash re-landscaped Green Park as part of his project to landscape St James's Park. Trees were planted for the first time and Constitutional Hill was straightened to make a processional route onto the mile outside Buckingham Palace.

Green Park is so called because Charles II's wife, when she found her husband picking flowers, thought they were probably for another woman and she ordered them all removed – at least that is the story.

Green Park is a place to enjoy the play of sunlight through leaves, the sway of wildflower meadows and the song of visiting birds. While the north-eastern corner of the park is popular with sunbathers and picnickers the charm of Green Park lies in its simplicity.

To continue its close association with the Crown, an area has been set out as a Coronation area. It was planted on behalf of King Charles III to celebrate his coronation



following King Charles II who joined the other two Royal Parks together.

There are three war memorials in the Park from the Canada Memorial in the east to the Bomber Command Memorial in the west. In the shadow of Wellington Arch, meanwhile, lie the Memorial Gates which pay powerful tribute to the five million people from India, Africa and the Caribbean who served in two world wars.

Green Park is well known as an area where visitors stop to sit down in one of its iconic green and white striped deckchairs. It is a place for quiet rest from the busy streets of London. In July 2021, it even hosted a herd of elephants!



## **Local news**

An update of all the news and views that are important to our neighbourhood

#### **Post Office**



Our understanding is that Grosvenor is trying to arrange with one of the local shopkeepers in Eccleston Street to open a sub-post office there. It is clear that despite all our protestations, and the meeting with the Post Office Union members in St Barnabas Church that the Post Office is extremely unlikely to keep the Crown Post Office in Eccleston Street open.

Obviously, a sub-post office is better than none, but it is sad that our village would have lost the full and proper service.

#### **Baker and Spice**



At last it seems that Grosvenor has found a tenant. It is called Cleo and sports its offerings as providing brunch and dinner. We wish it much success and hope it has more luck on the site than the previous occupiers. We have no opening date.

#### **Memories of China**



Now a distant memory, it is over a year since Grosvenor refused to allow the restaurant to continue trading. Residents and visitors alike miss it and cannot understand why such an internationally known and excellent restaurant was forced to close.

Grosvenor said they wanted more vibrance and longer opening hours and, it seems, pavement dining. They do not seem to consider the fact that the restaurant is the ground floor of a residential block of flats and the residents are bound to be adversely affected by the numbers of people coming and going, making noise into the early hours.

I passed The Thomas Cubitt in Elizabeth Street a few days ago. It was a very busy day. All the windows and doors were open and the noise was very significant and I thought how awful it was for residents. It will come to Ebury Street too when Grosvenor find a tenant that lives up to their required opening hours and "vibrancy".

### **Community safety** briefing

Grosvenor has arranged a community safety briefing with the Met police in Eccleston Yards on 27th June. It will cover the following issues:

- · Perception of crime in the area
- Crime hotspots
- · Crime figures
- Reporting crime
- · Hints and tips on crime prevention
- Q&A

We will report the outcome and information next month.

## The night-time economy



We received an email from a resident in Wilton Place. They were complaining about the Berkeley Hotel that had guests sitting outside well after midnight. Under the terms of the licence, the area is supposed to be cleared by 11.30pm.

The complainant also said they were amazed licence has been given for the upper deck outside terrace until 1am. We await confirmation but this is a noise nuisance.

very disturbing and antisocial. Residents are being disregarded. The same resident also complained of the Peninsula Hotel that had an event on the rooftop. The noise was substantial with loud music.

As the issue of night-time economy appears to be an election pledge to increase fiscal growth, we can only imagine that politicians have no knowledge of what this really means to residents and do not do their homework, and do not listen. The night-time economy is already taking over from quiet residential streets. We can see it here in Belgravia where late-night opening is being encouraged by Grosvenor and local residents are being ignored when complaining of the noise and other problems that arise. We need to make sure any licensing applications which are applied for are not damaging to the residential community.

#### **Cleveland Clinic** breakfast event

The Cleveland Clinic has invited our readers to take up an offer for a breakfast event on 9th July 2024 at 8am. For those who are interested in the issues, this does seem a very convenient and helpful offer.

The following is the link to book a place which we understand is free:

**Book your place** 



**Breakfast with Dr Panos Gikas Arthritis of the Hip and Knee** Tuesday 9th July 2024 | 8am Tickets from Eventbrite (click link above)



# Last chance to save the Post Office BY OUR COUNCILLORS

he most recent issue of *The Belgravia Society Magazine* featured an impassioned plea for all members – and everyone else living in Belgravia – to join the campaign to save the Post Office on Eccleston Street. It is a campaign which has occupied much of our time recently as local Councillors.

We all recognise how important the Post Office is to local people who rely on it for many day to day transactions and, for many of whom the prospect of having to walk to Lupus Street is simply not feasible. The public consultation has now closed, but the fight goes on. Of course, no decisions will be made on its fate during the election period when the rules of 'Purdah' apply to ensure political neutrality, but immediately after the election we will be lobbying whichever Minister has responsibility for the Post Office to make the case for why this should be saved. This is vital, not only for Belgravia residents, but also for those living a short way away in the sheltered housing units in Pimlico, for many of whom this is their closest branch.

We were very encouraged to see many Belgravia residents at the public meeting on 13th June at St Barnabas Church Hall which we organised in conjunction with the Communication Workers' Union and at which both Cllr Elizabeth Hitchcock and I spoke of our determination to do everything possible to fight the closure plans. Most shocking was the Union representatives' firm belief that the closure is to provide savings so that the Post Office can cover its legal fees from the Horizon scandal – while the Government has committed to pay the compensation for all the sub-postmasters wrongly accused of fraud, the Post Office needs to pay the legal fees racked up from defending itself. What a travesty it would be if Belgravia people have to suffer to pay for that awful scandal?

Let me close with a plea to all Belgravia Society members. Our campaign would gain much more traction with 'celebrity' endorsement. This is a campaign with cross-party support, with backing from Amenity Societies, Traders Associations, Neighbourhood Forum, Grosvenor and the Unions, to save a vital amenity for the people of Belgravia. If any of our higher profile residents were prepared to lend their support – even just with a short statement or video – what a fabulous message that would send: that Belgravia is prepared to fight to save a facility so important for our older and more vulnerable residents.



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	
Mobile		Date	
	Application I CONSENT and nails to me until I unsubscri		_
Signature(s):			
Please let us know if you ha	ave any special interests, con	cerns or queries:	
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#### The Belgravia Society Magazine

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