

# SEBRA NEWS W2

## PARKING ISSUES

ISSUE No 110  
SPRING 2024

### E-BIKE PARKING

OBSTRUCTIONS  
CONTINUE IN  
BAYSWATER

### CAR PARKING

WINNERS & LOSERS  
IN CONTROVERSIAL  
CHANGES TO FEES

STREETS BLOCKED AND EMISSIONS-BASED CHARGES -  
READ MEMBERS' VIEWS IN SAFETY VALVE. PLUS...

LOCAL NEWS, ARTICLES AND FEATURES  
WITH UPDATES ON THE BIG STORIES

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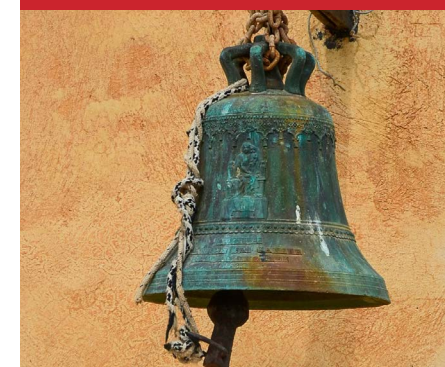
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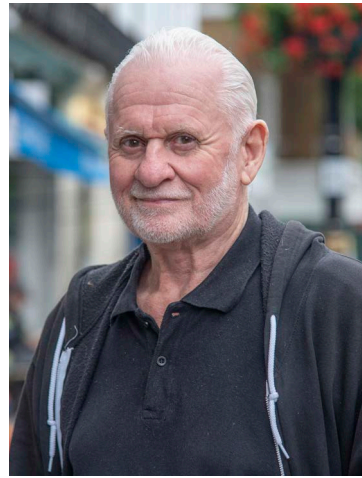
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# From the Chairman

**Chairman:** John Zamit  
**Email:** chairman@sebra.org.uk  
**Phone:** 020 7727 6104  
**Mobile:** 074 59954 245  
**Address:** 2 Claremont Court, Queensway, London W2 5HX

**A**s I put pen to paper and finger to keyboard, the sun is shining and Spring is around the corner.

In the last issue I said it was *'another very great read'* and same applies here as this issue is an essential read for everyone interested in what is happening in SEBRALAND.

In addition to local coverage there are other very intriguing articles, from *'For whom the bell tolls'* and *'Is Dido Elizabeth Belle still buried at St George's burial ground in Bayswater Road?'* to another must-read from Christopher Penfold: *'Setting Course for Utopia'*.

## LOSERS & WINNERS

*Safety Valve* in this issue is packed with great articles from our members *'Letting off Steam'* for very good reasons.

None more so than the pages regarding new emission-based parking charges coming into effect on 18 March in Westminster, followed on 1 April by major changes to the annual cost of a Residents' Parking Permit.

Both changes are going to be a great shock to many motorists, with probably many more losers than winners.

On parking in a parking bay, motorists will not know what the cost will be until they put their car registration number and time required into their app.

For those with vehicles with high emissions and particularly diesel vehicles, it may be cheaper, when in the West End, to take the risk of getting a parking ticket than paying to park.

On the new Residents' Parking Permit, electric vehicles, who presently pay nothing will have to pay £40 or £80.

For standard cars those previously paying annually £117.50 or £166 will now pay between £90.95 to £371.00.

There is also an excellent article on the excessive cost for charging an electric vehicle at a lamp column, particularly between 4pm and 7.30pm.

I think there will be a negative *'kick back'* from many motorists and possibly voters, after these new arrangements come into force.

## FOND MEMORIES

February for me and many others was a very sad month, as two people who gave their lives serving the community passed away.

### Paul Akers

Paul was 78 when he sadly passed away on 2 February. He was liked by everyone, especially his colleagues, during the 47 years before his retirement in 2019, having joined Westminster in 1972.



Paul celebrating his retirement.

Paul was the Senior Arboricultural Manager at Westminster Council but was fondly known as *'the tree man'*.

Nothing was too much trouble for Paul and he helped and advised countless residents across the Borough and was always happy to arrange a tree walk.

After Paul's retirement I kept in contact with him every few weeks and he was a regular guest at SEBRA's summer party. My thoughts go to his wife Diane and to her family.

### Alderman Barrie Taylor

Another sad loss was Barrie Taylor, who passed away on 11 February. He was a former Westminster Councillor for 28 years, the first four representing the Bayswater Ward, and was made an Honorary Alderman in 2018.



Alderman Barrie Taylor will be sorely missed.

Barrie, apart from being a great *'larger than life'* character, was a very consciousness and hard-working Labour Councillor, respected on both sides of the political divide, who rose to become Chief Whip and then Deputy Leader of the Labour Group.

Barrie also had long and distinguished senior management career in the NHS. Barrie was also responsible for setting up the not for profit charity *'Trees for Christmas'*, an example of his efforts being the wonderful annual tree in Queensway and others throughout Westminster.

He was born on exactly the same day as me, and I will miss his birthday cards.

Barrie was married to our local MP Karen Buck, and my sincere condolences go to her and all the family.

## CITY INSPECTORS UPDATE

The new arrangements for the City Inspectors has now been running for around five months and we are fortunate to have a great team covering the Bayswater and Lancaster Gate Wards.

The trouble is, as I predicted, is they only cover from 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday. Evenings and weekends are supposedly covered by a 'roaming' dedicated team of City Inspectors.

Well unfortunately, they are not 'roaming' enough into SEBRALAND, and you can tell this by just walking along our streets, particularly Queensway with its begging



Our cover photo - Sunday in Brooklyn. Abandonment of e-Bikes and queueing causing various problems.

and rough sleepers and Westbourne Grove with its abandoned e-Bikes blocking the pavement.

A good example is the first article in *Safety Valve*, which covers abandoned e-Bikes in Hereford Road and the long queues blocking the pavement on weekends for the *'Sunday in Brooklyn'* restaurant on the corner of Westbourne Grove. Matters are not helped by the outside tables and chairs and abandoned e-Bikes, making it impossible for residents to pass by on that side of road.

If our regular City Inspectors were out and about on weekends patrolling, this unacceptable issue would have been picked up and resolved. The issue was not in fact picked up by our 'roaming' City Inspectors, until I drew their attention to the problem. Interestingly, this major issue was not addressed by the Cabinet Member when responding to the article.

## FAREWELL OR AU-REVOIR

They say *'You wait for ages for a bus to come along - and then two come along at same time'*



Karen Buck MP - Standing down at the next General Election.

Well its the same here as we now know that not one but both of our local MP's are standing down at the next General Election. Karen Buck, (Labour - Westminster North), has been an MP

for 27 years on our 'patch' and Nickie Aiken, (Conservative - Cities of London and Westminster) since 2019. Prior to that Nickie was Leader of Westminster Council for three years.



Nickie Aiken MP - Also standing down as a Member of Parliament.

In a future issue we will cover their careers in more detail, but in for now we wish the two them well, and thank them for all their efforts on our behalf.

## THANK YOU

Finally it leaves me to sincerely thank all our contributors, our advertisers and, of course our wonderful Editor, Steve Olive. Without any of them this issue would not be arriving through your letter box.

*Happy reading.*

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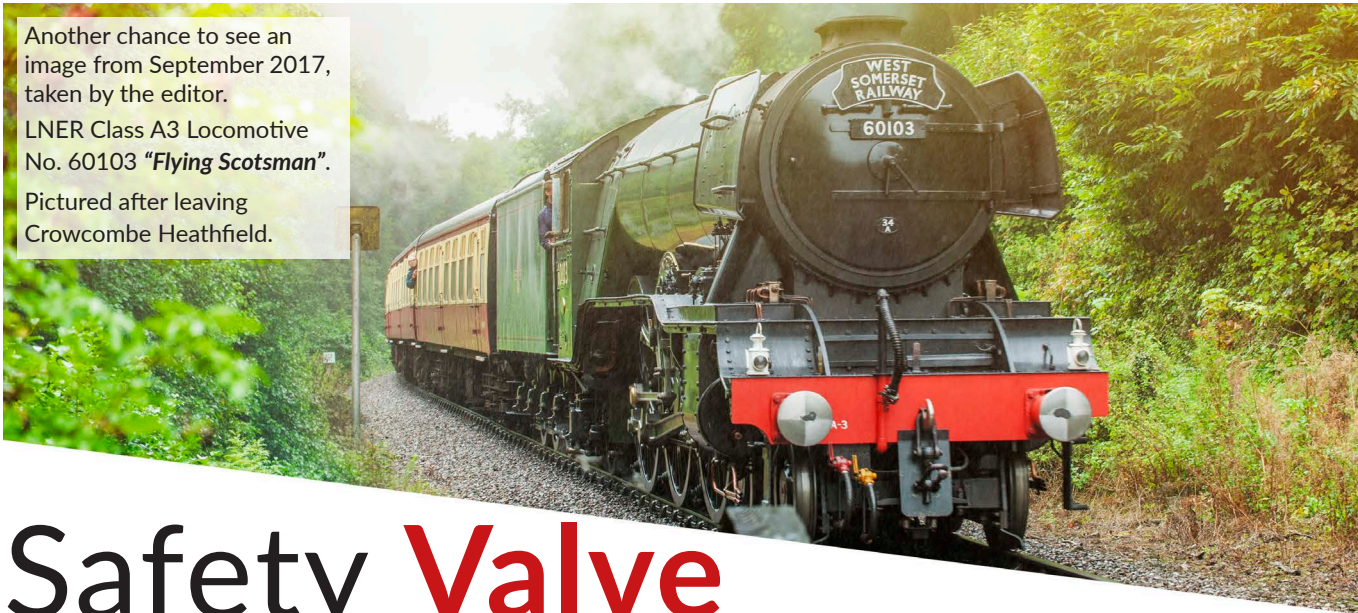
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Another chance to see an image from September 2017, taken by the editor.  
LNER Class A3 Locomotive No. 60103 "Flying Scotsman".  
Pictured after leaving Crowcombe Heathfield.



# Safety Valve

**W**e could have filled six pages with letters, images, headlines and commentary on the subject of e-Bikes alone. The problem of them being dumped on the streets continues, though we are cautiously hopeful that the issues being faced might reduce over the coming months. We shall see though, given that their use will surely peak during the holiday season.

With space being limited we have printed in full a letter from Mary Moore Mason, plus selected "snippets" from a few of the other communications we received. Rest assured that SEBRA will remain "on the case", doing what we can to work towards a permanent solution.

Moving on to other topics, you will find an excellent three-page spread relating to upcoming changes to car parking charges and news of a success with a bus stop.

We also have a very serious letter about a knife crime incident involving a young person on his way to school, and we are extremely grateful to Superintendent Beth Pirie for her comments. Crime remains something that affects many in SEBRALAND but this was a particularly worrying incident.

Elsewhere you will find coverage of new parking charges in Westminster, with an excellent letter about EV ownership in the borough, the latest on Lord Hill's Bridge, and much more...

## HOW DO WE RESCUE OUR PEDESTRIAN PAVEMENTS FROM E-BIKES/E-SCOOTERS AND OUTDOOR DINING CONGESTION?

**Mary Moore Mason**  
Hereford Road, W2

**A**s a resident of the northern end of Hereford Road for many years I am distressed by the ongoing pedestrian walkway congestion along both sides of our street. Not only have abandoned e-Bikes and scooters left across the walkways on both sides of the street been a real challenge to both our resident and visiting pedestrians, but we also are experiencing a congestion problem with pavement dining and restaurants' queues on our south-west corner.

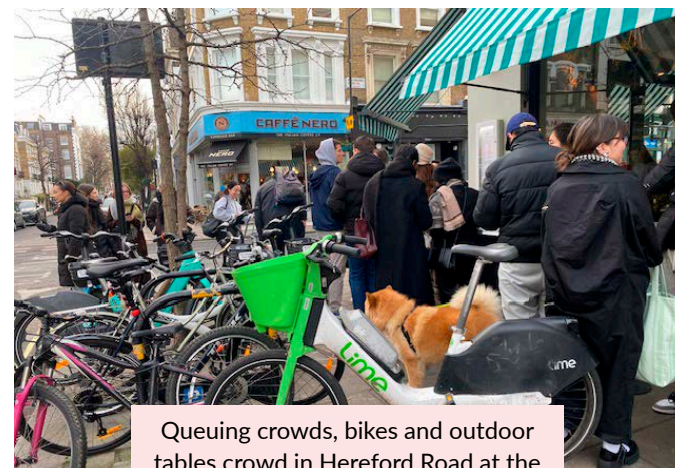
The latter problem usually exists only on weekends when large queues form outside the Hereford Road/Westbourne Grove corner entrance to the popular Sunday in Brooklyn restaurant. At their side waiters and waitresses are serving diners seated at outdoor tables behind a temporary barricade separating them from closely-packed crowds, usually two or three abreast, who are waiting to get into the restaurant. This means that

those trying to get through either have to elbow their way through the mob or move off the pavement into the traffic flow on the parallel roadway.

Among those affected have been parents pushing prams or accompanied by toddlers, elderly, sometimes disabled, people walking with sticks or frames and individuals carrying heavy shopping bags from nearby grocery or other stores.

During the current cold, rainy weather when fewer people want to dine outdoors the problem may be diminished, but my fellow residents and I are concerned about what will happen when the weather and temperature improve this spring, and the outdoor diners reappear to join those queueing.

And this raises an important question: why does Westminster Council allow restaurants to have outdoor dining on narrow residential streets particularly



Queuing crowds, bikes and outdoor tables crowd in Hereford Road at the corner of Westbourne Grove.

when it is obvious that entrance queues will block off pedestrian access, in our case to a busy bus stop right around the corner on Westbourne Grove?

Is there not a licensing department which can either deny permission or rescind it if it thereafter proves detrimental to pedestrian traffic? At the very least restaurants such as the one under

discussion should be encouraged to not offer outdoor seating on the busy weekend days when there are massive entry queues, and at the same time to tell those waiting for entrance to stand closer to the building, and allow pedestrians space to pass.

As for the e-Bike/e-scooter situation, it seems to have become somewhat less of a problem on the western side of Hereford Road, partly because a nearby docking bay incorrectly placed on the relevant Google map has now been removed, and also because more e-Bikers/scooters have realized they can use the long-established regular bike parking area around the corner on Westbourne Grove. However, that may end up crowding out the regular bikes it was designated for.

Things have improved on the eastern side of the street as well. This is largely due to the introduction of a small off-pavement e-Bike/scooter parking bay. However, some bikers still dump their bikes across the nearby pedestrian way used by a local blind resident among others. Also, to accommodate this docking bay, useful pay-to-park spaces were removed without consultation with the local residents, it is questionable



The new e-Parking bay on Hereford Road near the junction with Westbourne Grove.

whether or not they will be adequate for the number of additional bikes expected to visit the area in the future, and thus the dumped bike problem may return because riders of the bikes do not seem prepared to look for an alternative bay when the one they want to use is full.

Also, as one of my fellow Hereford Road residents points out, it will be interesting to see how WCC deals with consultation and publicising the redesignation of car/van parking bays (both for resident and pay to park use) for the use of privately owned commercial bike hire businesses. This includes questions about how many such bays are needed in any given area.

*"It is really outrageous - it might be worth asking Westminster to install a bike and scooter park in Hereford Road - near to Sunday in Brooklyn which, I suspect, is the place from which they arrived in the first place.*

*Hopefully we will soon follow the Paris example and ban these bikes from Westminster's streets!"*

**Nicky Hessenberg**  
Westbourne Park Villas, W2

*"I often move one of the e-Bikes when they are left completely blocking the pavement. These are commercial companies randomly using public pavements and often resident parking places, with no accountability. It is unfair, inconvenient and dangerous for many pedestrians and other residents."*

**Bob Annibale**  
Hereford Mansions, W2

*"I took this photograph the other night, whilst I was walking down Hereford Road to Westbourne Grove.*

*The bikes were completely blocking the pavement."*

**Susan Crane**  
Kildare Terrace, W2

*"On a weekend it is usually impossible to get by the crowds waiting outside Sunday in Brooklyn on the corner of Hereford Road and Westbourne Grove without going off the pavement, often into puddles. Has anyone taken this up formally with the restaurant proprietors? Action is needed!"*

**Sally Sampson**  
Hereford Mansions, W2



## THE PRESS COVERAGE

The *Evening Standard* front page of 25 January says it all, describing the situation with Lime bikes as an "epidemic". Visit: [bit.ly/SEB-ES-Lime](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/lime-bikes-epidemic-a3711111.html).

Furthermore, the article in *The Guardian* is excellent. Visit [bit.ly/SEB-GRD-Lime](https://www.guardian.co.uk/transport/2024/jan/24/lime-bikes-epidemic) for some essential reading on the subject.

**Evening Standard**  
25/1/24



**The Guardian**  
14/1/24



### Response from Paul Dimoldenberg

*Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality*

**W**e continue to work closely with the e-Bike operators, Transport for London, and other authorities to find long-term solutions to the huge growth in e-Bike usage in the borough.

Westminster's e-Bike parking bays scheme aims to provide easy access to dockless e-Bike hire and end the problems caused by e-Bikes being dumped on the pavement.

We know we have more progress to make towards greater compliance and we are improving the network where possible.

All of our bays have been implemented under a trial which means we want to hear from you whether the bays are suitable in practice, or otherwise, so please get in touch with us via our website to let us know your thoughts:

[www.westminster.gov.uk/about-council/contact-us](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/about-council/contact-us)



# A TALE OF TWO CHARGES

EMISSIONS-BASED PARKING FEES MEAN BIG INCREASES FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

**T**hree SEBRA members contacted *Safety Valve* to comment on the upcoming change in Westminster to an emissions-based pricing for car parking.

Ian Gill (who has also written the excellent article on the opposite page) reflects what many will feel, that the scheme is just aimed at raising cash. Angus Hudson criticises the very short notice and complexity of the new charges. (Changes come into effect on 18 March and 1 April). Overleaf Sophie Massey Cook questions the scheme and there is a response to the whole topic from Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg.

**T**he Council's ridiculous attempt to justify the emissions-based charges for residents' parking is just a smokescreen for raking in cash.

Everybody wants to have a clean vehicle and reduce their emissions and when they choose to upgrade will not be influenced by their parking policy. It will depend firstly on availability of on street charging then by the age of their existing vehicle. The Council should instead practice what it preaches, increase the number of charging points in the borough and stop virtue signalling.

**Ian Gill**  
Alfred Road, W2

This subject was raised at our recent AGM, with the bizarre situation that in certain zones in London a parking fine will cost less than paying to park for an entire day.

SEBRA has serious concerns about this scheme. The previous one was simple, with visitors paying a flat rate per hour, plus an additional 50% for diesel cars. There was no fee to park electric vehicles. The multiple rates from 18 March mean that visitors will not know the cost of parking until they enter their registration number. (The system accesses DVLA emissions data to ascertain a vehicle's CO2 output levels).

**W**hilst I can understand the thinking behind these proposed changes to residents' permit pricing, the Council is going to introduce them at extremely short notice.

This is just nine weeks after being advised of these proposals, giving a two week window to comment upon them. Residents who might be adversely affected by the changes have little time to respond to them. I think at least six months' notice should have been given. Also it is proposed that an additional annual diesel surcharge of £50 apply to resident parking permits for pre-2015 diesel vehicles to address the issue of the emission of Nitrogen Oxides (NOx).

Residents will also see increases across the board from 1 April. Not only will a parking permit now only cover a single vehicle (currently two vehicles can be listed on a permit), but even electric vehicles (for which there was no charge for a permit) will attract a permit fee of either £40 or £80 depending on battery capacity. Whilst there are currently just two rates (plus one for motorcycles), there will be seven.

The official document from Westminster City Council, outlining all of the new fees, bands and zones, runs to ten pages. You can view it on the SEBRA website at the following link: [bit.ly/SEB-Parking-2024](http://bit.ly/SEB-Parking-2024).

It would be fairer and indeed more sensible to state a precise emission standard a vehicle must meet (Euro 6 for example), which is exactly what the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) requirements does very effectively.

Having a separate standard for Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) emissions in Westminster compared to the rest of London/ULEZ Standards will only go to add a layer of confusion and contradiction. It will also lead to the unfair charging of certain pre-2015 ULEZ compliant diesel vehicles that meet the recognised standards.

**Angus Hudson**  
SEBRA Member, W2

## RESIDENTS' PARKING PERMIT COSTS - CURRENT AND PROPOSED

Band	CO2 emissions (g/km)	Current Permit Cost	Proposed Permit Cost per Year*
1A	Electric vehicle up to 69kwh battery	£0	£40.00
1B	Electric vehicle over 69kwh battery	£0	£80.00
2	1-90	£117.50 for vehicles with an engine capacity of 1,200cc or less. £166.00 for vehicles with an engine capacity greater than 1,200cc.	£90.95 or £140.95
3	90-130		£123.05 or £173.05
4	131-150 or pre-2001 <1200cc		£139.10 or £189.10
5	151-255 or pre-2001 >1200cc		£214.00 or £264.00
6	256 or more		£321.00 or £371.00
M	Motorcycles	£57.00	£60.99

\*Second figure is for diesel cars registered 2001 to 2014

### HOW WILL THE NEW CHARGES AFFECT YOU?

If you know your vehicle's CO2 emissions figure then simply use the table above. Remember that the second figure on the final column applies if you have a diesel vehicle registered between 2001 and 2014. If you don't know your car's emissions figure there are plenty of online sites where you can look it up, or it is written on your V5 document. For all vehicles registered before 2001 the charges are different. Please refer to the document linked to in our introduction for full details.

# EV CHARGING IN WESTMINSTER - THE INCONVENIENT TRUTH

**Ian Gill**  
Alfred Road, W2

**I** received an email from WCC regarding their proposed changes to the charging structure for residents' permits and paid-for parking in the borough.

It's all neatly clothed under their misleading slogan "A Fairer Westminster" but in reality is just typical Labour politicisation, any excuse to raise revenue and persecute people they feel are better off.

Of course the opposite is true. The excess charges for parking diesel vans will affect tradespeople who will pass the cost on to their customers. A pensioner needing to call out a plumber to fix her central heating will end up paying more as a result. Contractors I use are refusing to come into central London because it costs them £100 a day. Everyone needs plumbers, electricians, locksmiths, builders and decorators and this new scheme affects the cost of living in Westminster for all, regardless of whether they even own a vehicle.

The ten page document setting out the charges is very complicated, instead of the simple pricing that we have had for the 38 years that I have lived here.

The previous administration tried to encourage a switch to cleaner vehicles by offering two incentives to electric vehicles (EVs) and plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) owners. Firstly there were no fees for a resident permit. This was not much of an incentive and ultimately unsustainable as more people made the switch. The second more valuable one was the ability to park anywhere in the borough on metered bays for a nominal 10 minutes charge and stay for the maximum duration for the space. The nominal fee was to register the time of parking. This had the effect of expanding the zone of the permit to cover the whole borough and was a real decider when it came for me to replace my aging vehicle.

### Editor's comment:

**A**s someone who has owned an electric vehicle for ten years I hope that readers will forgive me for commenting on Ian's article, rather than the Chairman.

I have given general comments on my "From the Editor" page, but Ian's case, as someone trying to do the right thing in London, strikes a chord. Whilst I don't charge my



Fees in Feb '24 - about to change.

There are two big problems with switching to an all electric vehicle; availability of on street charging and range anxiety. If I had off street parking I would have switched to an EV and installed my own charging point. That would enable me to charge overnight at reduced off peak rates.

As I live in a flat on the fourth floor that's not an option. This is the case for the majority of drivers in cities. There were not sufficient charging points four years ago and so I chose a PHEV. My hope was that in ten years the infrastructure would have been installed and I could make the move to a full EV, that hope seems to have faded since Boris and Carrie were replaced in central government. It's looking increasingly likely to be 2035 before that happens.

PHEVs are a great short-term solution, they have small batteries that can be charged quite easily via the lamp post chargers at 6KW. More charging points have sprung up recently with many more lamp posts converted and some bollards with charging being installed. Also restricting the adjacent residents' space to EVs only means more opportunities to use them.

Unfortunately the operator Ubitricity was bought by Shell with disastrous consequences. They used the spike in energy costs to double the costs per KWh, which despite a general fall have remained too high. Currently 44p/KWh (plus 20% VAT) compared to the domestic rate of around 27p/KWh (plus 5% VAT). Also they added a blocking fee

for remaining plugged in over four hours. Not a problem if you are around but an inconvenience if you are at work and not able to pop back and move the car once charged. Then they introduced an unfair high peak charge from 4pm to 7.30pm, further reducing the opportunity to make use of the points at a reasonable rate. Predictably they didn't introduce an off peak rate overnight.

They continue to charge a transaction charge (as did Ubitricity) which is equivalent to nearly 1KWh, which for my 8KWh battery works out at 12.5% surcharge per unit if empty, if half full it's 25%. That's enough of a disincentive to stop me topping up the battery. Removing this so that I could top up, even for 30 minutes to an hour, would have a big impact on my emissions when travelling short distances, 5-10 miles between meetings.



How the Monopolies Commission didn't intervene to block this is hard to fathom. There is such a huge conflict of interest for an oil major to be in charge of the charging network, higher electricity charges force people back to their forecourts.

As WCC own the lamp posts surely they could intervene and force Shell to make the system fairer. That's the way to improve air quality.

I would encourage anyone else who finds these charges unfair to email: [tmo.westminster@wsp.com](mailto:tmo.westminster@wsp.com)

car in London (it is used for countless shorter trips here in Somerset), I can easily put myself in Ian's position and sympathise entirely with the points he makes. If Councils want cleaner air they should make it simple and affordable for EV and PHEV owners to charge their cars. Yes, not everyone can afford these vehicles, but you don't incentivise potential owners with physical and financial barriers. Car charging in London should be cheap and easy.



# More Busy Months as Lord Mayor

*By Councillor Patricia McAllister  
Lord Mayor of Westminster 2023-24*



**T**he heavily-built boxing MC lifted the taut ropes and beckoned me in with the sharp instruction: "In you get!" – and suddenly there I was, standing square in the middle of a full-size boxing ring.



**In the Porchester Hall, ready for the Lord Mayor of Westminster's Cup.**

The boxing ring at Porchester Hall, Bayswater, is the most unusual venue I have made a speech in so far as Lord Mayor – a far cry away from podiums and stages. But what a venue – albeit initially slightly terrifying for me – as I welcomed boxers before the start of the Lord Mayor of Westminster's Cup. This fantastic night, organised by All Stars Boxing Club, has been just one of a number of fascinating engagements since I last updated SEBRA NEWS W2 readers. Let me update you on some highlights.



**In Norway, helping to cut down the tree for Trafalgar Square.**

I hope you got a chance to see the tree – I thought it looked particularly good this year – at some point over Christmas. It was a unique opportunity to make the annual trip to Oslo to help cut down the nominated tree. Now, in case you saw the pictures of me armed with a saw on social media, let me tell you a secret – the Mayor of Oslo is extremely fit. Anne did a lot of the pushing and pulling enabled by the fact her hobby is mountaineering – hence her prodigious upper body strength!



**Enjoying the company of HE Ambassador Jan Thompson and the Lord Mayor of Oslo.**

The packed diary of the Lord Mayor's office provides you with happy occasions, but also serious visits which allow me to support causes I feel passionate about – especially homelessness.

As you know, the two charities of my Mayoralty are The Passage, the homeless charity based near Westminster Cathedral, and the Carers Network.



**With Anne Lindboe, the new Lord Mayor of Oslo.**

I was particularly gratified to be asked to open the Change Please café on Cardinal Place, a social enterprise which helps the homeless by offering training and employment together with advice on housing and finances.



**A lunchtime shift at The Passage.**

And I followed that up with a volunteer lunchtime shift in the kitchen of The Passage. My task was to serve the starter – vegetable soup with bread – and as I worked, I was struck by the amazing camaraderie between volunteers.



**The New Year's Day Parade - A spectacular London event which raised money for a number of great charities.**



These are inspiring people doing an emotionally demanding job. People become homeless for a complex mix of reasons – relationship breakdowns, evictions, mental health issues, drug addiction or those whose lives have simply taken an unlucky turn. It is a chastening experience to hear their stories, and one which makes you grateful for what you have.

The generosity of Westminster residents and businesses during this Mayoral year has, I am pleased to say, helped both the Passage and Carers Network. How wonderful that they have received generous donations throughout the year from all kinds of events taking place in Westminster from bake sales to church services to the London New Year's Day Parade.

Two other themes have run in parallel in recent months – the potential of our young people and the increasing focus on the climate crisis.

I had the chance to chat to a group of technology apprentices when they visited the Lord Mayor's parlour recently. This eleven-strong group, aged 18 to 20, belong to the generation who will work in a world where AI and emerging technologies lead us into mind-bending new realms. And they are well set up for it. They were so interesting, and it was fascinating to hear about their work.

The potential of our young people was also on show when I opened the Jubilee Community Leisure Centre. Two schools – Queen's Park Community and Wilberforce – attended, along with star athletes like runner Bianca Williams. The children



**At the opening of the Jubilee Community Leisure Centre.**

From industry to young people, it's clear the climate crisis is rising to the top of the agenda. I was a guest at the Royal Cocoa Festival Dinner, where industry and non-governmental organisations discussed how this product – so common in our homes – needs to be produced in a way which benefits small farmers as well as global supply chains. It was also engrossing to talk to the organisers of a competition run by the British International Education Association to promote sustainability in the fashion industry. The fact we have six schools coming in to talk about the environment and sustainability makes you realise the decisions we take now will pay dividends in decades to come.

By the time you read this I will have just three months of my Mayoralty left to run, but the pace will not let up! Chinese and Lunar New Year, the London Marathon and 200 years of the RNLI will all be diary highlights.

On 30 April we mark the 25th anniversary of the Soho pub bombing, and I will be attending events to mark that appalling attack on our LGBTQ community. One of the privileges of being Lord Mayor is its convening power; that ability to meet people from so many of our communities – Chinese, Bangladeshi, Georgian, Irish to name but a few in the last few weeks. So much to celebrate, but the Soho pub bombing anniversary will be a poignant moment to reiterate that hate has no home in Westminster.

It has been a fascinating year – not easy, but infinitely rewarding. To return us to the boxing ring at the Porchester Hall, I look forward to going the distance until the bell rings – but it's the people I meet who have proven the real knock out.



**And finally, a seasonal tradition. The Lord Mayor unveils a singing postbox in Oxford Street.**



# “QUEENSGATE”

## THE LATEST ANSWERS TO THE BIG QUESTIONS

The subject of “Queensgate” first appeared in the Spring 2023 issue of SEBRA NEWS W2. Funding for the so-called “Gateway to Queensway” had been refused. We expressed our dissatisfaction with the decision, and were disappointed that no public consultation with interested parties and residents’ associations was carried out.

You can read the full story on page 25 of that issue, and coverage continued on page 28 of our Summer issue in our article “Queensgate - The Chairman asks the Questions”. Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg (Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality) was kind enough to respond to those questions and he did so again in the autumn issue where John asked the big questions on the topic.

We know that readers are very interested in the “Queensgate” story, and so we have asked updated questions, and thank Paul Dimoldenberg once again.

### SEBRA NEWS W2



**“QUEENSGATE”**  
LABOUR REFUSE FUNDING FOR NEW GATEWAY TO QUEENSWAY  
PLUS A GREAT DEAL MORE INSIDE ANOTHER FEATURE-PACKED ISSUE

#### QUESTION ONE:

**JOHN ZAMIT:** So firstly, where are we on the removal of the Toilet Block on the Bayswater Road and the reinstatement of the land behind, either side of the two narrow entrances to Kensington Gardens, before handing back the land to the Royal Parks?

**PAUL DIMOLDENBERG:** We are working with The Royal Parks and Fenton Whelan on a project to deliver the Fenton Whelan designed scheme before the end of the year.

#### QUESTION TWO

**JZ:** In the meantime, cannot the stairs down to the two closed toilets not be at least kept clean (see photo of rubbish in our last issue attached, where nothing has changed) and also can the overgrown area behind be tidied up?

**PD:** Yes, we will attend to this.



The stairs to the toilets are still strewn with rubbish.

#### QUESTION THREE

**JZ:** What is the latest position on the closed Westminster Toilet block at southern end of the Broadwalk in Kensington Gardens - are they going to be opened as toilets by the Royal Parks as the toilet signage is still in place in Kensington Road?

**PD:** The Royal Parks are undertaking a feasibility study into the potential future use of these toilets.



Toilets permanently closed, but the signs remain.

#### QUESTION FOUR

**JD:** Can you please advise us of completion date for the Public Realm works around the Park Modern development, which are progressing very well, particularly on the Queensway section?

**PD:** The Public Realm works on the Bayswater Road and Inverness Terrace elevation are due to complete in late February / early March. The Queensway elevation is more challenging as there is a threshold at the new dentists which is high and requires further design work. The intention is to begin works on the Queensway elevation in April.

#### QUESTION FIVE

**JZ:** Can we please have an update on the bus stop, presently outside Caroline House, west of Queensway, as to when it will be reinstated, following recent Traffic Order consultation, to the original location between Queensway and Inverness Terrace?

**PD:** Given the informal feedback we have received from residents of Caroline House and the commitment made by TfL the bus stop will be returning to its original location between Queensway and Inverness Terrace.



The temporary bus stop outside Caroline House will soon be returning to its original location east of Queensway.

#### QUESTION SIX

**JZ:** My final question is to ask for an update as to when the major improvements works, to improve and increase the signalled pedestrian crossing points into Kensington Gardens from Inverness Terrace and Queensway, are to start, and what is the likely duration of the works?

**PD:** We are engaging with TfL to get their approval for the changes to the signals. The presence of the bus stop will impact capacity at the junction of Bayswater Rd and Inverness Terrace, so TfL may require remodelling of these junctions. We are programmed to deliver the project between October and December 2024.



Works continue to improve public realm around the Park Modern development.

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# Setting Course for Utopia

by Christopher Penfold

**With Putin's war on Ukraine now two years old and with new wars raging in the Middle East and the Sudan, our world feels more unstable and insecure than it has been since the end of the Second World War. Not a good moment, you might be forgiven for thinking, to be looking forward to that most elusive prospect which Thomas More first imagined in his book "Utopia" in 1516.**

Half a millennium later, when Steven Pinker published "*The Better Angels of Our Nature*", he sub-titled it "*A History of Violence and Humanity*" and his broadest of broad conclusions was that, since the beginning of time, humanity has progressed in so many obvious ways but perhaps least obviously, he concludes, we have become less violent.

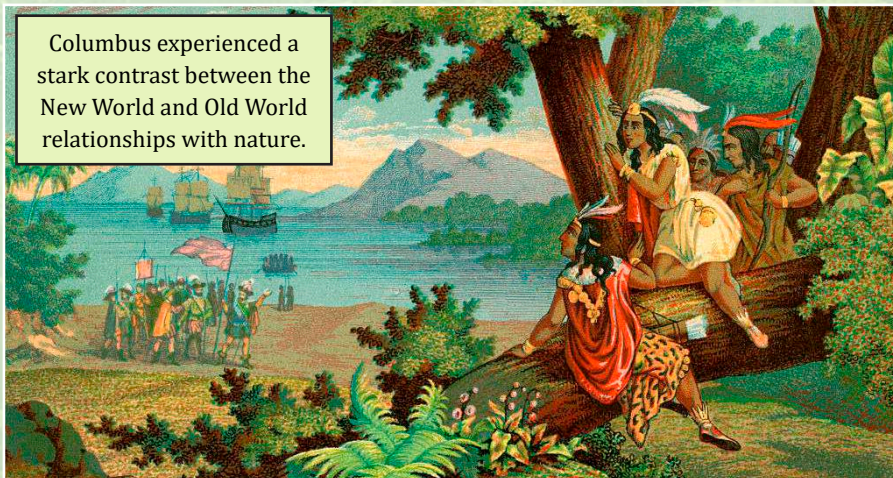
At times like the present, with our world everywhere in flames, Pinker's conclusion feels like nothing so much as wishful thinking. The Doomsday Clock, initiated in 1947 by Albert Einstein and J Robert Oppenheimer to measure the risks of nuclear armageddon, now stands at 90 seconds to midnight. And if you take a geopolitical look around you today you would be forced to conclude that the pendulum of human progress is now on a backward swing.

If, as many astrophysicists aver, other forms of life which might develop in galaxies way beyond our reach, would most likely develop and die in passing moments of time just as our own species is now threatening to do on planet Earth. If that is, indeed, the case then, as a species, we are looking at a future without hope.

Yet, in the early years of our human lives, most of us seem to be genetically hard-wired to an idea called 'progress'. We are born, we are nurtured, we are educated, we mature and we are empowered as adult humans to make some kind of positive contribution to the improvement of our human condition. In extrapolation from that thought, if progress leads to improvement, then improvement leads to perfection - and to an eventual utopia.

So let's ignore the doomsayers and the chaos theorists for a moment to consider some of the ways in which our species might continue to make progress with both the development and the preservation of the beautiful planet which it has been our good fortune and great privilege to inhabit.

We do, of course, share this space with uncountable other species and our relationships with some of them leave a lot to be desired. In fact some are shamefully exploitative and often downright abusive.



Columbus experienced a stark contrast between the New World and Old World relationships with nature.

When Columbus first arrived in what he called the New World in 1492, the welcoming indigenous people gave him gifts of parrots and other exotic species not known in the Old World. They were presented to him as familiars by people who would not dream of killing and eating animals they had raised in a process which biologists now call familiarisation. It was a culture clash with the practices of animal husbandry which we in the Old World call domestication. And the clash emphasised the stark difference between our exploitative relationship with other species when compared with the relationships which indigenous people of the New World had fostered with their fellow species for centuries.

In Britain, we live on a crowded island where our lifestyle has resulted in a very serious loss of bio-diversity. We have commandeered more and more

territory from the habitats of other species for our own living space and we have mined and harvested more and yet more of our land's natural resources.

Meanwhile international travel has made it possible for many of us to visit and enjoy the unspoilt territories in different parts of the planet where many of our fellow species live out their natural lives less pressured by humanity than they do in our homeland. And without having to move from our comfy sofas, brilliant wildlife

film makers have made it possible for us to wonder at the lives of other species and at the exotic habitats in which they live. We see close up that those lives are lawless, dangerous and intimidating but we are thrilled. Who has not felt an adrenaline rush as we have watched a hungry tigress in pursuit of a hapless gazelle, eventually bringing it down and tearing apart its still-throbbing flesh to share amongst her progeny? We admire the athleticism, the sheer speed and agility of the predators at the top of the jungle food chain — from the safety of our own living-rooms.

But look again at that sated tigress, licking her still-bloody chops and opening her massive jaws in a yawn as she stretches out in the sun to rest. She has a tongue in her mouth, two rows of formidable teeth; she has a nose, two ears and two eyes and she has four limbs and a tail — more than enough

of a physical resemblance to remind us that, way back in pre-historic times, we shared the same ancestry. She, like us, emerged from the same primordial slime in which all life on Earth evolved. She, like us, has survived by virtue of the one law that governs all life on Earth — the survival of the fittest.

Well, not quite all life on Earth because, during the past five thousand years or so, we humans have evolved as what American biologist Edward Wilson refers to as an eu-social species. We have learnt to look out for each other and, in so doing, we have become successful. We have developed the rule of law and, much later, we have developed the rule of international law. We have even begun to pass an occasional law to protect some of our fellow species. In some states cruelty to animals is a punishable offence and the hunting of nearly extinct species is occasionally prohibited.

But we do have a way to go before we could feel justifiably houseproud enough to welcome 'civilized' visitors from distant galaxies to our hopefully utopian planet. Amongst all the species with whom we share this space, we are still the top predators. In order to feed our insatiable appetite for meat, we have built concentration camps and industrial abattoirs which most of us would find deeply repellent if we were to experience their satanic workings at close quarters. As the remarkable new film "*The Zone of Interest*" shows us, in the context of Auschwitz, we are most of us able to compartmentalise and turn a blind eye to the violence done to others, and to other species — violence which most of us would shamefully have to agree would not score us many points in paradise.

We should not now need reminding that the flames of the climate crisis are beginning to engulf us and that rising sea levels are beginning to flood some of the most populous coastlines and riverbanks of our planet. Not before time we are beginning to make changes that we hope will ameliorate the effects of the catastrophe that we have unleashed upon ourselves. Some of us are looking for that great technological fix that will save us at the eleventh hour; others are looking at changes in our lifestyle that will make our continued habitation of the planet more sustainable.

To name just one of those potential fixes, it is just possible that, within a decade or two, all of the protein foods that we need to sustain us will be



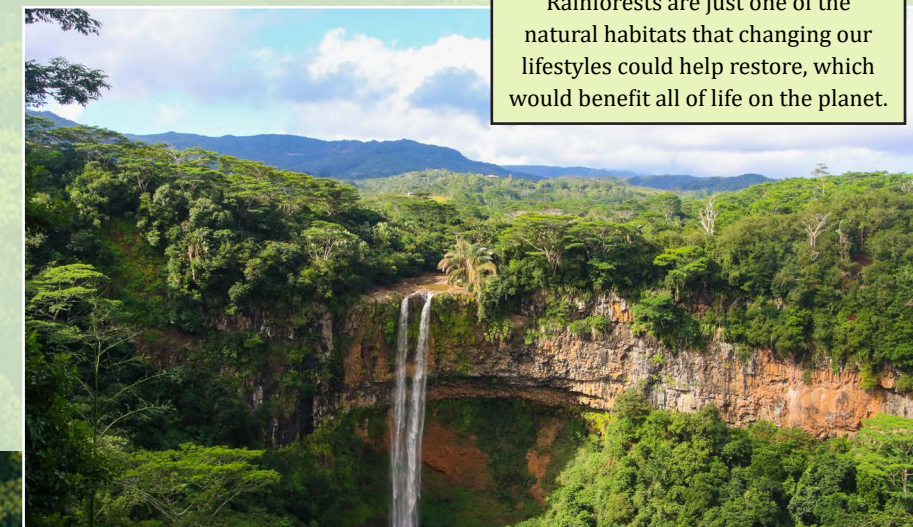
"The flames of the climate crisis are beginning to engulf us."

produced in robot-run factories and served by master chefs in Michelin starred restaurants all over the world. It might take a generation or two for us to get used to the change but the prospect of limitless variations of flavour will surely begin to tempt us.

But a new world of gastronomic delights will be the least of the benefits that such a change will bring, not only to us but also to our fellow species. With so much of the Earth's precious flatlands still being mis-appropriated for the mass production of beef and dairy products and with so much of the upland hill country devoted to the farming of sheep, the natural habitats of our fellow species are being recklessly destroyed at a phenomenal rate.

Without the need for billions of beef cattle, milk cows, lambs, pigs and chickens so much of that abused landmass could be quickly restored to the natural habitats for our fellow species whose shrinking worlds we now pay good money to glimpse before they are entirely gone.

Many of the next generation of wildlife films now in production are devoted to the exploration of animal consciousness. From the comfort of our sofas we will soon be watching exotic animals thinking and dreaming and communicating in ways we have been unable to fathom until now and in ways very similar to ourselves.



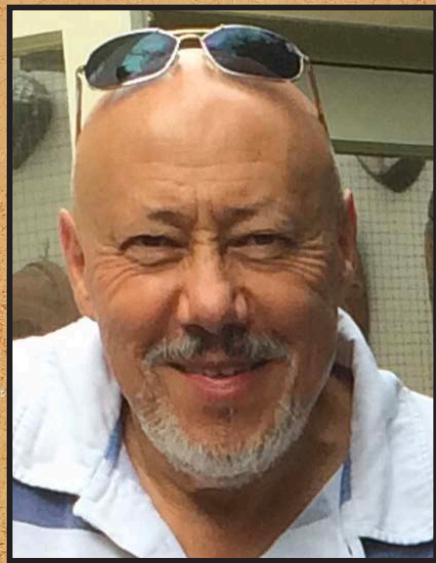
Rainforests are just one of the natural habitats that changing our lifestyles could help restore, which would benefit all of life on the planet.

Will they prove to be brothers and sisters like us? And how will we then feel about coralling them into concentration camps and gas chambers? The concept of the unfeeling fish may prove to have been a convenient fiction with which, until now, we have been comfortable — but our oceans and rivers could soon be teeming with sentient creatures once more. And our restored rainforests could soon be absorbing all the carbon that our human lifestyles produce.

Are these really no more than utopian dreams? As we seek to re-calibrate our relationships with the species with whom we share this beautiful blue planet, we may find it possible also to re-calibrate our relationships with each other in the vital pursuit of peace and prosperity. That, of course, remains our top priority. But because we have got where we are today as a result of our status as top predator species, it does not necessarily follow that we must remain predators for ever. It should not be beyond our human capabilities to negotiate a less abusive relationship with the species with whom we share this space.

We look forward to a positive change of direction in that pendulum swing, and the progressive itch that is genetically hard-wired into us all at birth may yet carry us to an Earthly paradise in which we would be proud to welcome visitors from afar. Peace, prosperity and progress towards a sustainable life on Planet Earth: in a word, Utopia. It may be generations into the future but we need to be setting course towards it now because it is driven by that vital ingredient, currently in such short supply, but which is so essential to the health of our progressive species — hope.





## For whom the bell tolls...

by Dr Allen Zimble

Dr Zimble is Chairman of the Hyde Park Paddington Forum and a former Chairman of the Hyde Park Estate Association.

Here though he writes from a personal perspective, exploring how the United Kingdom has changed for the worse during the 27 years that he has resided on these shores.



I am an immigrant to this country, having arrived in August 1997 from a South Africa finally beginning to recover, at long last, from the years of intolerance, abuse and hatred that characterised the terrible and unconscionable Apartheid era.

I discovered a country, in the UK in 1997, in which the rule of law was respected, drivers behaved courteously on the roads, levels of crime were way below those to which I had been accustomed, the postal service actually worked and incredibly delivered items the next day, and there was a general tolerance of different points of view in a country where class, at least to an outsider, appeared to be more of an historical issue than a present reality, if my experience of South Africa was anything to go by.

I have always been grateful to this country for opening its doors to me and my family (notwithstanding the fact that my paternal grandmother was from East London), and I was extremely proud, six or so years after arriving here, to become a British citizen.

Doing so meant, for me, that I had an obligation not just to enjoy the benefits of a generous, tolerant, modern democracy, but to embrace fully its defining culture and values, and participate in giving back to the community in whatever ways I could. Saying this is not intended as a self-congratulation or a signalling of virtue - it is a pure statement of principle. We live in a country, in the UK, which provides free schooling and

**“ I have experienced, over the years, a decline in the values of mutual regard and mutual respect that seemed to characterise this country upon my arrival.**

medical assistance for all who need it, excellent and accessible public transport, Council housing for many, social security, a plethora of public services, and non-discriminatory human rights within the framework of a political and legal system that ensures and protects those rights and our essential freedoms. What we are privileged to enjoy in the UK, with all of its faults, is certainly not enjoyed in many parts of the world.

It is with a sense of deep sadness that I have experienced, over the years, a decline in the values of mutual regard and mutual respect that seemed to characterise this country upon my arrival. Drivers are increasingly selfish and inconsiderate, the postal service, now privatised, is less efficient and reliable and may reduce its service to delivering post every two to three days, the police are underfunded, understaffed and incapable, drug gangs are infiltrating and controlling town and city neighbourhoods, there is scant regard for legitimate authority, crime is on the increase, and there is an increasing and dangerous polarisation between different community groups.



This is not to say that people should not have the right to express their opinions and concerns or should not be permitted to mount lawful protests in support of those concerns - those rights are at the heart of the decency and respect that characterise the modern liberal democracy that is Britain. But where the freedom of one individual, or group of individuals, compromises or corrodes that of another, then a form of violence is being perpetrated. And where one group calls for the destruction of another group, that is not only a betrayal of the right of freedom of expression, it violates the values, and is against the law, of this country.

Shockingly, only eighty years after the horrendous convulsion that was World War II, leaving tens of millions of people dead, disabled or displaced, causing catastrophic destruction, our fragile world is veering once again towards possible war. And this is caused by us, humans, who seem incapable of realising that we are all in this together, that our differences in culture, language, tradition and belief are what should make us stronger, more aware, and more resourceful, and not be the reason for threatening our mutual survival.

This is not to say that there are not serious concerns in our world about abuses of human dignity and betrayals of humanity that are carried out by individuals, communities and governments (and those seeking to overthrow those governments) - this is all too evident in our bleeding world.

Nor is it to say that Britain, in its history, has not contributed significantly to those betrayals and abuses in its greed for colonial expansion and the seizing of the natural wealth of those thus conquered. The historical record speaks for itself and the splendour of the great cities of the United Kingdom attests to some of that wealth.

The author discusses the right to lawful protest, emphasising its importance in a modern, liberal democracy.

immigrating to those twenty-seven years ago. It is a consciousness for which our forebears in this country paid a great price and it is a consciousness worth saving.

What is happening now is alarming, not just in the world, but in our own country. Divisiveness, distrust, hatred are spreading through our neighbourhoods. Conflicts are erupting, often across lines of faith and religion, always in the name of the same God, actually, destroying the sense of nationhood that historically allowed this country to stand proud and be counted amongst the nations. Our great consciousness is eroding.

Whether we be Protestants or Catholics, Methodists or Baptists, Sunni or Shia Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains or Jews, Bahá'í, Druids, atheists, or whatever else we believe in or associate with, or choose not to believe in, we are all of us members of the same community. We breathe the same air, we bleed the same way, our collective efforts will sustain our world or, if we follow the path of division and hatred, destroy it completely.

I am minded of the great words of John Donne:

**“Each man's death diminishes me, For I am involved in mankind. Therefore, send not to know For whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee.”**



The current conflicts are threatening a global war.

But a great consciousness seems to have been borne out of the suffering of this country through many, many conflicts and two devastating world wars, and that consciousness is manifested in the institutions and practices that came to characterise the country I had the privilege of

**“ What is happening now is alarming, not just in the world, but in our own country. Divisiveness, distrust, hatred are spreading through our neighbourhoods.**



Excellent public transport and housing for many. Two of the benefits of the UK mentioned by the author.



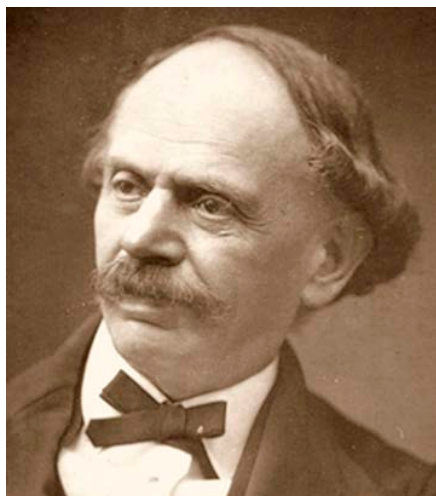
# Hitting the Right Notes

Following a break in our Autumn 2023 issue, the return of our "Blue Plaques" series is most welcome. Professor Lewis Lesley's efforts have been a great inclusion in these pages for seven years now, with 40 notable names having their stories told.

This time round we return to the music genre, something that has proved to be a rich source of personalities in SEBRALAND, and we present two composers who lived in Marylebone. Sir Julius Benedict and Eric Coates were resident in the 19th and 20th centuries respectively.

## Professor Lewis Lesley

Today we consider two composers who lived locally. They remind us of that wonderful Morecambe and Wise sketch with conductor André Previn. Eric Morecambe, an accomplished pianist, is told off by André Previn for playing the wrong notes, and replies with the immortal response "I'm playing all the right notes - but not necessarily in the right order." Here are two composers working in two different centuries, who left a music heritage. We need to value this legacy, in times when there are so many dissonant noises and voices.



Sir Julius Benedict. 1804-1885.

## SIR JULIUS BENEDICT 2 MANCHESTER SQUARE, W1

Our first commemoration was the son of a banker, born in Stuttgart in 1804. Clearly banking did not appeal to him, as he started music studies when he was 16, firstly in Weimar with Hummel. Then later with Weber in Dresden who was obviously impressed and took him to Vienna to meet Beethoven, where

he got an appointment as Conductor at the Kärnthnethor Theatre. From here in 1825 he went to Naples to take up a similar post at the San Carlo Theatre, where he also gave piano lessons.



Blue Plaque at Manchester Square, W1.

In Naples he wrote two operas in 1827, neither a success. So in 1834 he left for Paris, then to London in 1835, prompted by Maria Malibran, a Spanish opera singer. By 1836 he was the conductor of the Lyceum Theatre. He made an impression and got the conductor's job at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, with the English Opera, where he produced both of his own operas.

Meanwhile he married Therese, who bore him three daughters and two sons. Sadly one of his sons was killed in October 1851 in an accident on the River Rhone. This must have affected him badly since there was a gap in his career. His wife however went into a decline and died the following year, as did his own father.

By 1848 his reputation was secured by conducting Mendelsohn's Oratorio *Elijah* in the Exeter Hall, a public venue on the Strand opposite the Savoy Hotel.

Here the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind first sang in England. They must have got on well since in 1850 they both left for a recital tour of America, where he was her accompanist. The tour lasted for two years and Benedict returned from it in good fortune.

He stepped into the conductorship at Her Majesty's Theatre and at the same time became the conductor of the Harmonic Union! He must have thrived in having many roles since he became in 1845 the Director of the annual Norwich Festival, which can be traced to 1772, being one of the oldest City Music Festivals in Britain. Here his cantata *Undine* was staged with Clara Novello who sang for the last time in public.

His main claim to fame was *The Lily of Killarney* an opera put on at Covent Garden in 1862. In 1863 The Prince of Wales married the Danish Princess Alexandra, for which Benedict composed the Wedding March. Then his oratorio *St. Cecilia* was premièred in 1868. His only Symphony was played in 1873 at the Crystal Palace. He wrote more oratorios; *St. Peter* in 1870 for the Birmingham Festival, and *Graziella* in 1882, also at the Birmingham Festival. He then rewrote it as an Opera, performed in 1883 at the Crystal Palace.

He tried in 1875 to get into popular operetta by making an approach to W.S. Gilbert but without success. This did not stop him becoming the conductor in 1875 of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, a post he held until 1880. He did obviously hit the right notes, as he was knighted in 1871, and also became Knights of Austria and Wurttemberg in 1874.

By 1879 he had recovered from the death of his wife. In December he married Mary Fortey, a student, 50 years

his junior. If this was a joyous occasion, when other parts of his life were falling apart, with a disastrous opera tour and poor investments, leading to a testimonial being organised in 1884 to raise funds, as well as a festival to mark his 50 years in Britain. He lived less than a year, dying on 5 June 1885. His young widow did however inherit over £6,000, about £1million in 2024 values. Today his music is little played, although there are recordings. He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery.



Eric Coates. 1886-1957.

## ERIC COATES CHILTERN COURT, BAKER ST. NW1

Born one year after Benedict died, in rural Nottinghamshire, Eric Coates was influenced more by the 20th Century. He was lucky that there was music in his family, his father, the local doctor, being a talented flautist and his mother played the piano well.

He did not go to school but was taught with his four older sisters by a governess. At the age of six he began violin lessons. When he was 13 he went to a more accomplished violin teacher and attended University College Nottingham for lessons in harmony and counterpoint. He was persuaded to switch to the viola, which he liked better for its deeper and richer sounds. This opened the door to joining a local string quartet, which played his first surviving piece *The Ballad op. 2* in 1904 in the Albert Hall, Nottingham.

Against his parents wishes he applied to go to the Royal Academy of Music (RAM). They stipulated that should he fail then he would return to Nottingham to work in a bank. At his RAM audition he played his composition for viola of the Burns Poem 'A Red, Red Rose'. So impressed was Sir, Alexander MacKenzie, the Principal, that he was enrolled for

composition, rather than viola. His father however had to pay the tuition fees. In the second year he won a scholarship. His viola teacher Lionel Tertis was considered the best, and Coates earned pocket money playing for the Savoy Orchestra, including the Gilbert and Sullivan season of 1907. From here he graduated to 'serious' orchestras, starting with the Hamburg String Quartet, filling the place vacated by Lionel Tertis. He dropped out of RAM when he began to get pains in his left and then right hands, symptoms of neuritis, with which he suffered throughout his life. His playing got so bad that he was sacked by Henry Wood from the Queen's Hall Orchestra in 1919.

That did not stop his music from being played. *Stonecracker John* in 1909, and his *Miniature Suite* got an encore when first played in 1911. This was the year he met Phyllis Black then aged 17 at RAM, where she studied recitation. They fell in love but her parents would not consent to marriage, as he was a penurious musician with no prospects. When he got a permanent job in the Queen's Hall Orchestra her parents relented and they wedded in 1913. He did not serve in the Great War, as he was medically unfit but continued as a musician. His work reduced but his wife got more as an actress alongside the ambitious Noel Coward.



Blue Plaque at Chiltern Court, Baker Street, NW1.

From 1920 he worked as a full time composer. Their only child Austin was born in 1922 by which time Coates was in demand for his compositions. Henry Wood became a patron, giving the first performances of *Summer Days* (1920), *Joyous Youth* (1922), *The Selfish Giant* (1925), *The Three Bears* (1926) and *Cinderella* (1930), which he said were inspired by the stories read to his growing son.

He got a contract from his music publisher to write two orchestral pieces and three ballads a year. With the decline in the sale of sheet music, his principal income came from recordings and broadcasts. He was much in demand as a conductor of his own works, playing with orchestras in Bournemouth, Hastings, London and Scarborough. He got a contract with Columbia Records, the 'top ten' of its day. Among his fans was Sir Edward Elgar who bought each newly released disc.

Although his rising income allowed him to buy a family country house in Sussex, having shaken off the Nottinghamshire dust from his feet, London became his adopted home. Here he composed most of his memorable music, *The London Suite* (1933) which shot to fame when the BBC used the *Knightsbridge March* for the Home Service programme 'In town tonight'. By the *Sleepy Lagoon* (1930) became a popular song in the USA in 1940, before the BBC used it for 'Desert Island Discs' in 1942, still being broadcast.

During the Second World War he wrote *Calling all Workers*, which the BBC used for its morning show 'Music While You Work', encouraging industrial production. In between he became a Director of the Performing Rights Society (PRS), along with other composers including William Walton, to ensure that musicians were fairly rewarded for their work. His greatest claim to fame came in 1954, when a march he had written in 1953 was adopted for the film 'The Dam Busters', mentioned in my last Plaque article. In a 2003 review, Stuart Jeffries noted that Coates' "March as a valedictory anthem would make later composers despair".

Sadly while at his Sussex home in 1957 he suffered a stroke and died four days later. His remains are interred at the Golders Green Crematorium.

Two composers spanning over 150 years both avoided working in Banks by creating music that reflected the mood and needs of their times. Both were touched in different ways by Gilbert and Sullivan. Music entrances a world wide following. Some of their music can be still heard as both tuneful and stirring. Music is a universal language, transporting people from many backgrounds. It would be good if in our present age of 'intolerance', there were more means of creating harmony.



## How electric is personal road transport in London?

By Inge Lyngborg

**25% of London's CO2 emissions come from road transport. In addition, fossil fuel powered vehicles generate particulate matter and NOx, which seriously damages our health.**

**We all have a role to play in order to reduce CO2 and emissions from cars in London. These are:**

### Travel actively

Ideally, we would all be tempted to travel actively, reducing levels of car ownership and car use to Scandinavian levels.

59% of London households own at least one car/van. In Copenhagen only 29% of households own a car/van, and 49% of all trips to work or school are by bike. The high cycling rate in Copenhagen is said to be down to a network of simple, safe and connected infrastructure, which means that the bicycle can be a competitive mode of transportation for people of all ages and abilities.

### Take public transport

By taking public transport we contribute to reducing the volume of private cars on the road, which reduces transport emissions.

### Drive a less polluting car:

Another way of reducing air pollution and CO2 emissions is to choose to drive more environmentally friendly cars such as hybrid and fully electric cars.

In 2023, 23.9% of all new car sales in the UK were either electric cars (16.5%) or hybrid plug-in cars (7.4%) bringing the total number of plug-in cars on the road to 1,600,000 cars.

### TOTAL NUMBER OF VEHICLE TYPES ON UK ROADS

Petrol cars (2022)	19,000,000
Diesel cars (2022)	11,500,000
Electric plug-in (2023)	1,000,000
Hybrid plug-in (2023)	600,000

### Use electric taxis

TfL has since 2018 required that all new cabs licensed in London be Zero-Emissions Capable (ZEC)\*, and that rule was extended to private minicabs in 2023. With 90,559 private hire insurance covered vehicles in London, this regulation will contribute to improving air quality in London.

ZEC does not mean that the taxi is 100% electric. ZEC means that the taxis emit no more than 75g/km CO2 in exhaust emissions and can be operated with a minimum range of 20 miles. They are able to cover minimum distances powered solely by electric batteries if the driver chooses to drive them in that mode. It is therefore important that we encourage all taxi drivers of ZEC taxis to do so.

There are three types of ZEC taxis:

- 1) 100% Electric taxis
- 2) Hybrid taxis
- 3) Conversions of diesel taxis into 100% electric taxis (retrofit of the Tx4 black diesel cabs)

You can now book electric taxis e.g.

ELT (Electric London Taxis) [electriclondontaxi.co.uk](http://electriclondontaxi.co.uk)

Sherbet: [sherbetlondon.com](http://sherbetlondon.com)

Uber Green 100% electric [Uber.com](http://Uber.com)

Addison Lee [addisonlee.com](http://addisonlee.com)

COMPANY	ELECTRIC STATUS	MORE DETAILS
BLACK CABS	50% out of Fleet 14,700 are electric (zero-emission capable)	Purpose-built black taxis do have an onboard generator (in the form of a 1.5 litre petrol engine) designed to extend the 62.5 miles of range the battery provides.
ADDISON LEE	1,600 electric cars out of 5,000 cars	In December 2023 Addison Lee announced the addition of 600 brand new, zero-emission capable (ZEC) VW multivans onto its fleet, to replace its remaining diesel people carriers, and that its entire standard passenger fleet is now set to be zero-emission capable by April 2024.
UBER	10,000 electric out of 45,000 fleet	Funding 700 charging points. Uber has targeted a fully electric fleet in London by the end of 2025. The transition is partly facilitated by a £145m clean air fund Uber banked from levies on trips between 2019 and 2022 into individual pots for drivers to buy or subsidise renting an EV.

## A GUIDE TO ELECTRIC AND HYBRID CARS

<b>Plug-in Electric</b>	The stop-start nature of driving in cities ideally suits an electric vehicle, with plenty of chance to top up the battery with brake energy regeneration, and fewer chances to maintain high speed. Most cars on the market have a range of 100-300 miles on electric only.
<b>Plug-in hybrid</b>	This car type may use a petrol or diesel engine, but is cleaner to run than a purely fossil fuel-powered car. Hybrids can save fuel by using solely electric power at low speeds around town, and use electric motors to aid the internal combustion engine under harder acceleration. Most cars on market have an electric only range of 20-50 miles.
<b>Self-charging hybrid</b>	This car type has a conventional petrol or diesel engine with a low voltage (48V) battery and an electric motor, which is typically used to power electric components such as air conditioning and the radio only, or a short drive of typically less than a mile. The battery is powered when braking, which generates kinetic energy, which is returned to the battery as electricity. It is called regenerative braking.

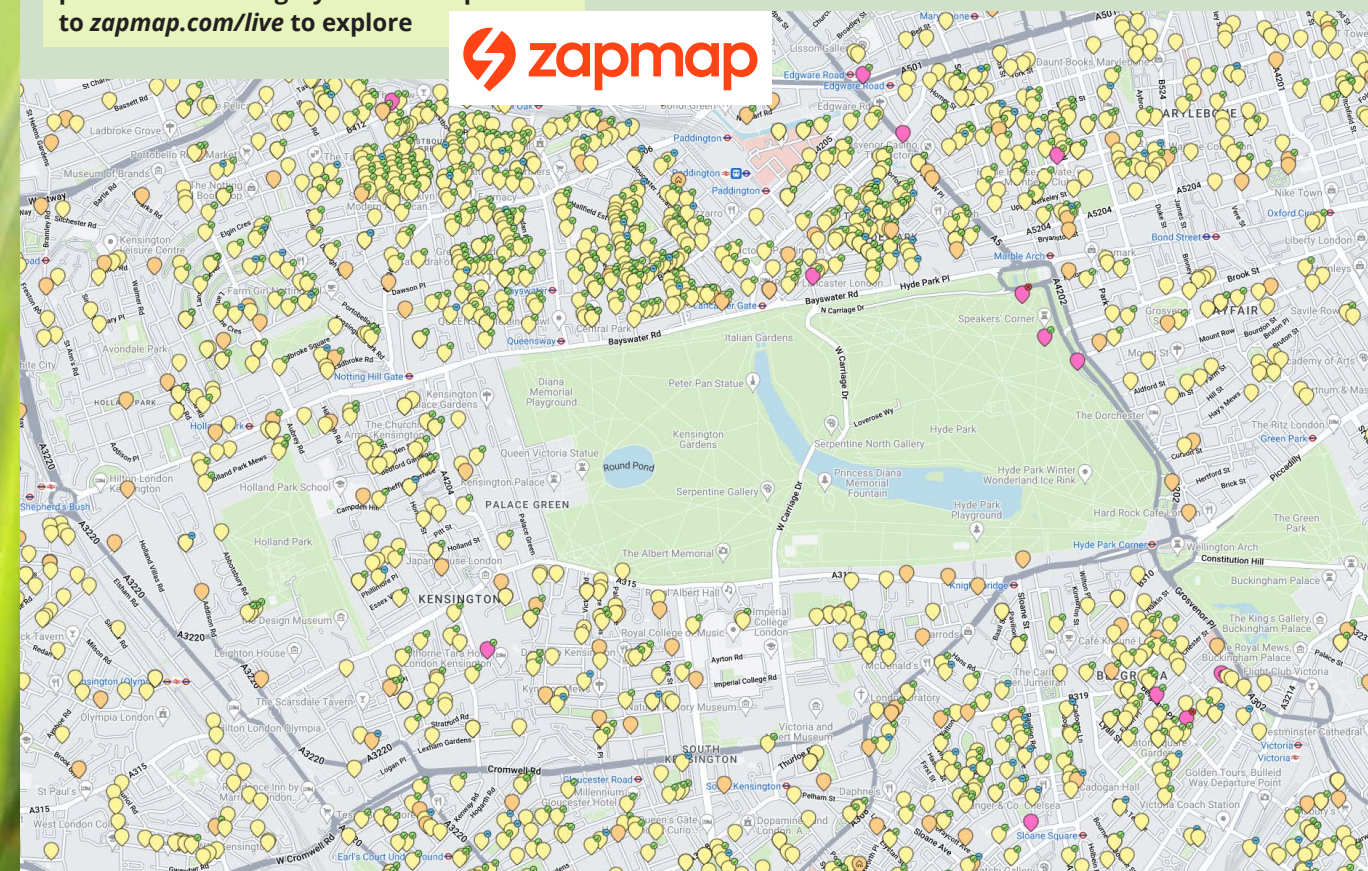
## Availability of Electric Vehicle (EV) Chargers

The UK's public electric vehicle charging network is expanding rapidly, there are quite a number of EV charging networks across the country.

Some are brand new and others well established, with some networks offering national coverage while others provide charging in a specific region.

- ⚡ 300,000 home chargers in the UK
- ⚡ 45,000 public electric chargers on
- ⚡ 2,500 on-street EV charge points in Westminster (ranging from 5kW to 50kW)
- ⚡ The standard rating for a home charger is 7kW. For an EV such as the 40kWh Nissan Leaf this will provide an 80% charge in around six hours.

Below: A map of the various charging points surrounding Hyde Park. Hop over to [zapmap.com/live](http://zapmap.com/live) to explore



Want to get in touch? Email us: [greenbayswater@gmail.com](mailto:greenbayswater@gmail.com)





# Health & Wellbeing



**SEBRA Member Lisa Powell** is a Registered Nutritional Therapist (CNHC) and Nutritionist (mBANT), Metabolic Balance Coach and Weight Loss Specialist. She also holds a Diploma in Performance Nutrition and runs corporate nutrition programmes. Her article for this issue looks at hay fever, a seasonal problem for many people.

## DEALING WITH HAY FEVER

While anti-histamines are the go-to for many they can cause side effects such as drowsiness in some people. So it's wise to make sure your diet includes the following nutrients to help minimise symptoms.

### HOW CAN NUTRITION HELP?

Certain compounds in food (and in supplements) have anti-allergic and anti-inflammatory properties that may help reduce symptoms. Always check with a health professional before taking supplements to assess contraindications.

- **Quercetin, an antioxidant flavonoid.** Found in capers, apples, broccoli, onions. Generally poorly absorbed but vitamin C improves absorption
- **Bromelain, an enzyme found in pineapple acts as a natural anti-histamine.** Works well with quercetin, improving absorption
- **Pomegranate juice, rich in polyphenols**



Pomegranate. A natural food with juice that can help alleviate symptoms.

- **Omega-3 fatty acids** are naturally anti-inflammatory. Good sources include oily fish, flax seeds and walnuts

- **Ginger and Nettle**
- **Prebiotics and probiotics to support the gut microbiome.** Easiest way to get prebiotics is by eating a wide variety of plants, including legumes, pulses, herbs and spices. Probiotic foods include yoghurt, kefir and fermented foods

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS TO MINIMISE SYMPTOMS

In addition to dietary strategies, other steps that can minimise symptoms include:

- **Limit outdoor activities on high pollen days**
- **Wear large, wrap-around sunglasses to prevent pollen entering the eyes**
- **Use a barrier like Vaseline around the nostrils to block pollen entering your nose**
- **Avoid hanging washing outdoors**
- **Shower and change clothes when you come home**
- **Vacuum regularly**

Hopefully the above tips can help keep your symptoms to a minimum this season. If you would like further support please get in touch.

### Lisa P Nutrition

web: [www.lisapnutrition.com](http://www.lisapnutrition.com)  
mobile: 07717 706017  
Instagram: @Lisapnutrition

**A**s spring approaches so too does hay fever season. Also called 'seasonal allergic rhinitis', hay fever is caused by an allergic reaction to pollen and tends to be worse in the warmer spring and summer months when the pollen count rises.

Symptoms can include runny or blocked nose, itchy or watery eyes, sneezing and an itchy throat. Allergy UK reports as many as 1 in 2 people in the UK may experience symptoms ranging from mild to severe. There is also a genetic association with hay fever and you are more likely to experience symptoms if you have a close family member that suffers with allergies.



Hay fever might affect as much as 50% of the population.

Zoe Birch is a Chartered Physiotherapist and founder of PhysioMotion, which operate a clinic at Green Park as well as providing physiotherapy at home. This article discusses Dementia, a disease that affects a vast amount of people, directly or indirectly, in the UK.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT DEMENTIA



**T**here are around 900,000 people in the UK that are living with dementia and many of us are ill-informed of the disease.

**We associate it with memory loss, inability to maintain independence and for some a death sentence.**

Like many diseases, dementia has progressive changes and if it is diagnosed early and managed well many people can maintain their independence and slow the progress of the disease.

For someone living with dementia, the worst thing is to adapt life immediately in preparation for the future changes. The best way is to continuously assess the support required as the needs change - this also includes someone supporting or living with someone that has dementia. It is very easy to take over as you want to 'help', but this can have a negative effect and cause the disease to progress quicker.

### DIFFERENT TYPES OF DEMENTIA

There are many types of dementia and the most common are:

1. **Alzheimer's disease**
2. **Vascular dementia**
3. **Lewy body**
4. **Young onset dementia**
5. **Frontotemporal dementia**

You can also get dementia related to other health conditions such as: Parkinson's Disease, alcoholism and Huntington's Disease. To learn more about the different types, visit: [www.dementiauk.com](http://www.dementiauk.com).

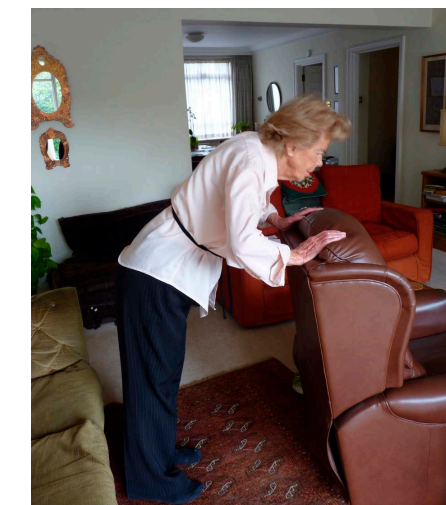
### HOW PHYSIO CAN HELP AT DIFFERENT STAGES

Initially Physiotherapy may not be required, but we are a great source of information as to what physical activities can be performed to change the trajectory of the disease. For example, physiotherapy can provide a range of

support from exercise programmes keeping the body strong and mobile to activities challenging brain function.

As the disease progresses, certain activities may become difficult and we can be called upon to assess these changes and provide more up to date advice, exercise programmes and support. It's important that someone living with dementia is allowed to perform tasks for themselves for as long as possible. This will help maintain their physical ability, but also keep their sense of purpose.

This is preferable to giving them heavy support or performing the tasks for them.

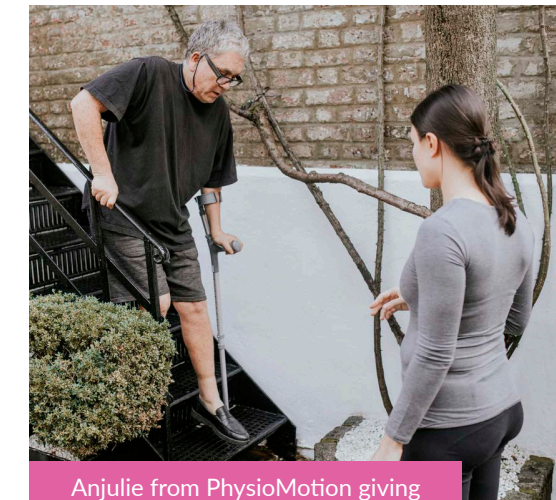


Exercise can be beneficial and comes in many forms.

### BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

Exercise for people living with dementia can come in many forms from walking and gym work to dancing and gardening. The health benefits include:

- **Improved mood**
- **Better sleep**
- **Reduced likelihood of constipation**
- **Maintenance of motor skills**
- **Reduced risk of falls because of improved strength and balance**
- **Reduced rate of disease-associated mental decline**
- **Improved memory**
- **Improved behaviour, such as reduced rate of wandering, swearing and acting aggressively**
- **Better communication and social skills**



Anjolie from PhysioMotion giving mobility assistance advice.

### OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Dementia doesn't just affect our physical ability and memory, as it changes all functions of the brain that controls all areas of our body.

Here are some other areas that should be thought of during the progression of the disease:

- **Vision**
- **Hearing**
- **Eating and nutrition**
- **Smell**
- **Touch**
- **Immunity**

Understanding how dementia progresses and what living with dementia is like, can help improve connections, improve the support provided and help patience. But even if we do understand, caring for someone or living with dementia can be hard and frustrating.

*Please, take advantage of the support that's out there.*



**PhysioMotion Ltd**  
10 Kendrick Mews,  
South Kensington, SW7 3HG  
[www.physiomotionlimited.co.uk](http://www.physiomotionlimited.co.uk)  
020 3422 6655



# News

## From the Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens

**Sue Price**

Chairman, Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens

Photography:  
Paul Shelley and Rob Dowling



**Pat Kelly**  
Assistant Park Manager.

### NEW FACES:

Welcome to them all. New members of staff are being appointed to several roles, and we had the great pleasure of meeting two of them recently.

**Pat Kelly** is the new Assistant Park Manager in Kensington Gardens. He comes from a background of working with the National Trust at Ham House and Petersham Meadows and running his own gardening business. He has had a lot of experience working with volunteers at the NT. He most loves horticulture, and his passion is landscape photography (our photographer looked nervous).

Pat chose the little shingle beach created offshore by the Henry Moore sculpture, for his photo to be taken. It is a safe place for all wild fowl to rest and relax, away from dogs off leads and marauding foxes (a small gully of water and a fine mesh fence separates it from the land). Welcome to Pat and we look forward to meeting him again before too long.

**Darren Share** is our new Director of Parks (that's all the Royal Parks), his office is in the Old Police House. He comes from Birmingham City Council where he looked after a comprehensive portfolio, including all Parks and open spaces, and was one of the driving forces behind Birmingham's annual entry at the Chelsea Flower Show. This main pavilion stand always won a gold medal, although Darren tells me I'm wrong and they missed a gold on a couple of occasions.



**Darren Share**  
Director of Parks.

When we met Darren, his chosen backdrop was the nursery as plants are what he loves most.

He told us he had already been round all the parks for an overview, covering as much as possible. He would now like to look again, more in-depth, and focus on managers' wishes for particular plans and projects. He's on week six of his time with us. His answer to "what are your early thoughts?"

**"Wow!  
It's wonderful.  
I love it more every day."**

We wish him luck and hope the path to a Chelsea Flower Show appearance might run smoothly for us?



This Mimosa is "Flowering beautifully".

### WELCOME TO THE NEW YEAR AND SPRING:

We leave you with some treats. Sadly, not the mimosa around the gas lamp outside the Old Police House. That was so vandalised by thieves stealing branches from it last year and following that, a prune, it isn't doing much this year. However, all is not lost as there is a healthy stand of mimosa at the Cavalry Memorial beds, flowering beautifully.

Also, my favourite Edgeworthia (that exotic Chinese yellow-flowered shrub, so reminiscent of oriental vases) is flowering away nearby. The other place to see this is close to the Albert Memorial in Kensington Gardens. Here, you can sniff the scent and get really close, as you could the mimosa at the Police House. It's so sad that the new plants are being located safely behind fencing ... but it seems to me we get what we deserve.



Edgeworthia - Sue's favourite.



**James points out the hellebore flower patterns.**

There are many exotic hellebores around both parks, bright yellow along South Flower Walk, and banks of frilly purple and pink ones. Our photos were taken back at the Cavalry Memorial, where gardener James was pleased to show us

the delicate patterns on the petals which grow stronger in definition as the flower matures.

Enjoy some spring flower walks in our beautiful parks, days are noticeably longer and even a little warmer.

### Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens

Old Police House, Hyde Park, London W2 2UH  
[contact@friendshpkg.org.uk](mailto:contact@friendshpkg.org.uk)  
[www.friendshpkg.org.uk](http://www.friendshpkg.org.uk)

### Welcome to a new year And a nod to the old one.

#### NOVEMBER:

**O**n the first Sunday in November every year, the London to Brighton Veteran Car Rally sets off from Hyde Park.

The Serpentine makes a fabulous world-famous backdrop with gas lights still glowing as the first and oldest vehicles set off at sunrise.



Setting forth from Hyde Park on the London to Brighton Veteran Car Rally.

Propelled by a variety of means, including steam, many don't have the ability to reverse so have to be lifted into place. Braking systems are a bit approximate, so stand clear and candle power (literally) illuminates the head lamps which are less than bright. Most set off with excitement and in keen anticipation of a journey to the Brighton seafront so it's sad for those which, having got to Hyde Park, won't even start when their time comes.

### 'T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS:

Very late on Christmas Eve a driver heading north and racing across the Serpentine Bridge, lost control of his car. He careered across two steep kerbs and along a length of stone parapet, causing huge blocks of stone masonry to collapse.



Serious damage to the Serpentine Bridge.

Surprisingly, neither he nor his passengers were seriously injured, and it was lucky that the car, probably having been slowed by the kerbs, didn't go over the edge and down into the water.

First of Royal Parks staff onto the scene was duty officer Jo who, Hyde Park Manager Jason Taylor says, was a real star. The damage was extensive. Massive Bath stone blocks and stone clad brick elements of this integral part of the world-famous grade one listed landscape were scattered for a great distance along the top of the bridge below onto the path and into the water.

The area was made as safe as possible with barricades erected quickly and the park reopened on Christmas Day, only a little later than usual.

Restoration will take time as it is a complex job, and the bridge has been shifted out of alignment. It is hoped that work will start this summer and it will be fully reopened in summer 2025. Jo is still finding bits of bridge many yards away high up in flower and shrub beds.

The impact must have been like an explosion.





City Hall, Kamal Chunchie Way, London E16 1ZE.



**Tony Devenish AM**  
GLA Member, West Central  
Knightsbridge & Belgravia  
Ward Councillor

## KEEPING TO THE RIGHT IN CITY HALL

“  
*The last eight years have flown past. Sadiq Khan and I were first elected, as Mayor of London and Constituency Assembly Member, on May 5, 2016.*

*A month before Brexit, it seems a lifetime ago! Keeping West London safe, keeping transport moving, building homes and a greener environment, are the only constant!”*

”

I hope readers, especially SEBRA's "Two John's" will forgive a slight look backwards as I write this column. I have always done what an early boss often encouraged me to do, "focus lad".

I plead guilty that I have somewhat failed to force the Mayor, Mr Khan who has all the Executive power and a £21bn per annum budget, to focus on outcomes. But I have never given up striving to do so. I am currently spending much of my time knocking on doors, not yet for the forthcoming General Election but for myself, standing for a third time as Assembly Candidate, along with my colleague Susan Hall AM as my party's Mayor of London candidate.

Susan, I can tell you is a match for Sadiq Khan, and Londoners (even loyal Labour voters) are sick of Sadiq and his appalling record on crime, transport, house building (or lack of it) and greenwash rather than the environmental change we need.

### HOLDING THE MET TO ACCOUNT - A TOUGH YEAR

To those who say they favour a form of proportional representation (PR) in elections, rather than first past the post, I would point to the London Assembly List Members elected already under PR.



With Susan Hall AM - Conservative Mayoral candidate.

This year the Chairman of the Police & Crime Committee, which I sit on, is a Green Assembly Member. There are only 3 Green Assembly Members out of 25 Assembly Members. The Greens are a Party who recently voted against a Plenary motion to protect retail shop workers from criminal assaults, on civil libertarian grounds. Shameful.

This individual Green Assembly Member has done good work on her hobby horse, trying to get more public toilets in London, but has allowed the Met Police Commissioner and senior officers to backslide on their monthly attendance at Police & Crime meetings, where the Met are held to account.

After several years of rising serious crime under Mr Khan and appalling cultural issues within the Met, laid bare by the Casey Report, enough is enough. So, I am glad to say I sponsored an Assembly Plenary motion (in February) which was passed unanimously, after a huge row with the said Green AM, to call on the Met to get back around the table pronto.

### HOLDING THE MAYOR TO ACCOUNT - ANOTHER TOUGH YEAR

Sadiq Khan also hates being scrutinised by the Assembly. In fact, after decades in political life, 18 years' a Westminster Councillor and 8 years on the Assembly I'm still shocked about the lengths Sadiq will go to avoid democratic scrutiny. Neither Ken Livingstone nor Boris Johnson behaved like this as Mayor.

In November, Khan cancelled the twice yearly statutory in person Peoples' Question Time (PQT), due to be held in Westminster, in the very secure building that Barak Obama appeared in as US President. Khan cited security grounds, which the Met failed to ever brief the Assembly on. Despite a promise from the Met Commissioner. Khan followed this up by moving the PQT to the new City Hall building in East London that even his Labour allies loathe going to.

An ill-tempered PQT followed where a few members of the public shouted at him, the audience of only a hundred Londoners was packed with mainly Khan's supporters. With the May 2nd, 2024, Mayor/GLA Election fast approaching, Khan refused to allow the next PQT due in February in Richmond Upon Thames to go ahead, nor would he allow a re-run of the City Hall robust debate. So, Londoners can log on to ask a question for just two hours at a virtual PQT. I will be boycotting this affront to democracy.

### HOLDING TRANSPORT FOR LONDON/THE MAYOR TO ACCOUNT, AS THEY ATTEMPT (YET AGAIN) TO REDUCE THE AREA OF ROAD SPACE.

Some SEBRA NEWS W2 readers may remember Martin Low, formerly Westminster Council's Director of Transport. A gent and a very wise man. I wish Mr Khan would have met Martin. Martin used to say, "traffic is like water, it does not disappear if you interfere with its movement, it merely flows elsewhere, often causing more problems than in its previous route".

### MAYOR'S QUESTION TIME - 21 MARCH 2024

(The last time I get to question the Mayor before Purdah commences from 19 March - 2 May 2024)

You can view these meetings on Live Mayoral webcasts which are available to watch at a later date.

I only get to ask Sadiq Khan one or two oral questions a month during a three-hour meeting (there are 25 Assembly members).

However, I can ask as many written questions as I like, so please do get in touch ON ANYTHING I CAN BE OF SERVICE. Details opposite.



With Councillors Rachael Robathan and Elizabeth Hitchcock at the memorial service for Philippa Roe, Baroness Coultie.

Over the last eight years the Mayor and TfL have meddled with our roads time and time again. Bayswater Road and Westbourne Street road surfaces have been dug up time and time again. It only leads to more congestion and more (not less) air quality issues.

No one is satisfied with this ill thought-out meddling: cyclists (we need workable pro-cycling changes), motorists, businesses, residents, etc, etc. It may be no coincidence that we are in a run up to both the 2nd May GLA Election and a forthcoming General Election, because Mr Khan is pressing ahead directly and through his proxies on even more fronts, including in two adjacent geographic areas to SEBRA which will undoubtedly have an adverse impact on traffic and air pollution locally.

### SAD NEWS: MEMORIALS, RECENT DEATHS AND GREAT FIGURES ANNOUNCING THEIR RETIREMENT.

It was an honour to recently attend two memorial services at Westminster Abbey on behalf of the late great Leader of Westminster Council (and my former Ward colleague) Philippa Roe, Baroness Coultie; and Lord Peter Brook, 2 Cities MP when I first moved to this great City.

We have also lost two fantastic former senior Councillors recently: Anne Mallinson and Barrie Taylor. All were civic Leaders I have always looked up to and will be much missed.

I was, I must confess, quite shocked that both our excellent Westminster Members of Parliament have announced their retirement. I'm sure SEBRA will do them proud with full tributes elsewhere in this issue ([Ed: We most certainly will, but in the summer 2024 issue](#)). Let me just say that both Karen Buck MP and Nickie Aiken MP will be much missed when they retire at the General Election. Huge condolences are of course due to Karen, who was Barrie's partner. Nickie and I fight like brother and sister (she always wins), 18 years a political "marriage". I feel bereft.

### MAYOR & LONDON ASSEMBLY ELECTION - 2 MAY 2024

Have YOUR say - You can vote in London and at a 2nd home (local elections only, not a General Election).

Please remember to use your democratic mandate, whoever you vote for. Local elections are not the General Election have YOUR SAY please on London issues and Sadiq Kahn's record. If you aren't registered to vote, see these links.

Westminster: [bit.ly/WCC-Vote-Reg](https://bit.ly/WCC-Vote-Reg)  
RBK&C: [bit.ly/RBKC-Vote-Reg](https://bit.ly/RBKC-Vote-Reg)

### Councillor Tony Devenish AM

- ✉ [tony.devenish@london.gov.uk](mailto:tony.devenish@london.gov.uk)
- ☎ 0207 9836576
- 🐦 @Tony\_Devenish
- 📘 TonyDevenishAM
- 📷 tonydevenisham





**Murad Qureshi**

Former Westminster City Councillor and former Assembly Member at City Hall

## KEEPING TO THE LEFT IN CITY HALL



The COVID-19 inquiry taking place at Dorland House on Westbourne Terrace.

## PUBLIC INQUIRIES IN PADDINGTON

**W**e have two major public inquiries in Paddington at Dorland House on Westbourne Terrace. Two on Grenfell and COVID-19 allowing local residents to watch the proceedings at first hand.

The Grenfell inquiry was about fire safety in our homes, particularly with cladding, and not just social housing but also private blocks like the M&M building, whilst the COVID 19 Inquiry was on the public health response by the government during the pandemic. The latter inquiry started in October 2023 to cover the core UK decision-

making and political governance, though that did omit Partygate. Requests were made for material from Johnson as the Inquiry asked for diaries, notebooks and WhatsApp messages by Johnson. In the end Johnson had provided materials to the Cabinet Office, although it later emerged that he had only provided WhatsApp messages from May 2021 when he got a new phone following a security breach on his previous phone. On the days Boris Johnson was scheduled, he arrived much earlier than the public to hide his entrance in and out of the inquiry where we had a public

ready to remind him of what he had said and done before and during the lockdown, and the impact it had had on their families and loved ones.



**W**ith the emerging new entrance to Paddington Railway Station along with the new entrance to the Bakerloo line from Praed Street, it certainly makes the entrance a lot more spacious.

It will certainly make for an entrance that can appear on the Paddington Bear movies, as in the first one they incredibly used the front of Marylebone station. Unbelievable really but they superimposed the Paddington Railway Station signage on top of the red brick entrance of Marylebone Station for the first of the Paddington Bear movies! Saying this, we could do with a lot more greenery, like a few trees and planters maybe, before the opening of the new Bakerloo line entrance into the tube?

## NEW BAKERLOO LINE STATION ENTRANCE



A sneak peek at the new Bakerloo line entrance.

## SUV PARKING IN CENTRAL LONDON



**N**ot surprisingly after hearing the results from Paris on SUV (Sports Utility Vehicles) parking, many wondered whether it can be done in London. Certainly in Central London boroughs like City of Westminster and Camden, is the short answer.

As TfL does not have charge over all the roads and streets of London in the same way as London Councils do – only the red routes – such an initiative would have to be lead naturally by critical Central London boroughs using their parking powers already.

Now SUVs are bigger and heavier cars, and are quite simply incompatible with our goal of reducing global emissions as well as improving our air quality. The majority of SUVs are petrol-powered and consume about 20 per cent more fuel than the average car. Even if the car is electric or part electric the same sums apply as heavier cars require more energy.

Bigger cars don't just emit more, their tyres produce more particulate pollution as well. They also take up more parking space as any pedestrian and cyclist

can tell you when passing them! And, to make matters worse, SUVs cause significantly more pedestrian fatalities than other cars. You only have to look at the tragic case of an SUV crashing into

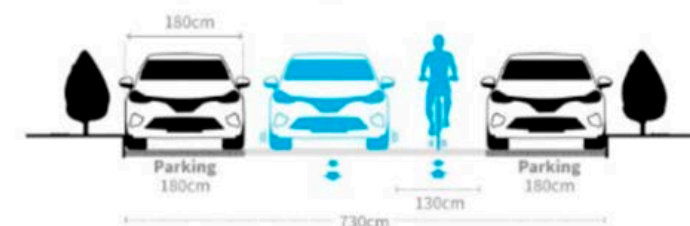
an end-of-year tea party last summer at a girls' preparatory school in Wimbledon, killing two school girls tragically. So the case for additional parking charging for SUVs is pretty clear cut.

So in short it can happen sooner than we realise in Central London, as SUVs do little of the off-road driving they were designed for in the first place.

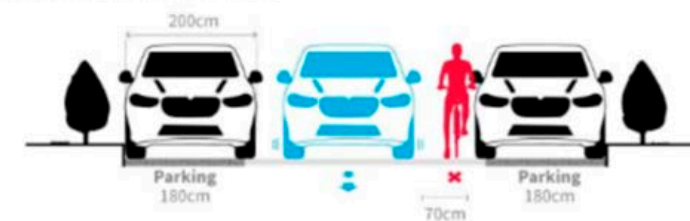
Sports Utility Vehicles really aren't suited to cities.

### Mega SUVs leave too little space for other road users

Average new car width: 180cm (200cm with mirrors)



Mega SUV width: 200cm (220cm with mirrors)



## KAREN BUCK MP AND BARRIE TAYLOR

**I**t would be remiss of me not to note the departure of two key leading figures in Paddington over the past 40 years. It is very sad news that Karen Buck MP won't be standing at the next election. She has been a brilliant constituency MP with a fantastic legacy of service.

I was involved in her selection in 1997 for Regents Park & Kensington North as the Youth Officer at the CLP and we could not have foreseen her dedicated service for over 25 years for the north of the City of Westminster and beyond.

Her decision to stand down was of course linked to Alderman Barrie Taylor's state of health, her partner

and soul mate. Barrie was a great mate of my dad's, the late Councillor Qureshi as fellow Councillors in Queens Park, City of Westminster. Barrie felt my dad's death quite keenly and not surprising as they were in many ways brothers. So from the Qureshi family we send them our deepest sympathies and condolences to Karen & Cosmo, Rebecca & Zack on his passing.



### LINKS FROM THIS ARTICLE

- Public Enquiries: [bit.ly/MURAD-Enquiries](https://bit.ly/MURAD-Enquiries)
- SUV Parking: [bit.ly/MURAD-SUV](https://bit.ly/MURAD-SUV)
- Karen Buck MP and Barrie Taylor: [bit.ly/MURAD-KAREN-BARRIE](https://bit.ly/MURAD-KAREN-BARRIE)

### KEEP IN TOUCH

- Sign up to my monthly e-newsletter: [bit.ly/Murad-Newsletter](https://bit.ly/Murad-Newsletter)
- Find me on Twitter: [@MuradQureshiLDN](https://twitter.com/MuradQureshiLDN)
- Visit my website: [www.muradqureshi.com](https://www.muradqureshi.com)





# The Property Market

## MARKET REPORT FROM CHESTERTONS

**T**he property market in and around W2 experienced significant fluctuations in the last quarter of 2023, with price declines, increased inventory, and shifting dynamics in the rental market. As a result, sellers are now adapting to a more challenging environment, while buyers and renters may find opportunities in a market that is gradually rebalancing.

### DATA REVEALS PRICE DECLINES AND SELLERS' CHALLENGES

According to Lonres' data for Q4 2023, the W2 property market witnessed a decline in prices, with a 4.7% decrease compared to the same period in 2022. This downturn was accompanied by a notable 9.8% reduction in transaction volume year on year, with sellers facing the challenge of negotiating the selling price as the average discount on the initial asking price reached 9.3%.

### HOUSES WITNESS A STEEPER PRICE DROP THAN FLATS

Achieved prices per square foot tell an intriguing story. Flats experienced a modest decline of 3.8% over the last year, while houses saw a more significant drop of 14.0%. These numbers shed light on the diverging trajectories within different segments of the market, with houses facing a more substantial correction compared to their apartment counterparts.

### MARKET SHIFTS TOWARD BUYERS

A significant 56.8% of properties on the market have undergone price reductions, reflecting the challenges sellers are encountering in the current climate. Moreover, there's been an 11.4% increase in the number of properties available on the market, indicating a shift towards a buyers' market. This increase in inventory may further contribute to the negotiation power of buyers.

### DYNAMIC TRENDS IN THE RENTAL MARKET

Rental values in W2 have exhibited interesting patterns over the last three months. Flats averaged £905 per week, while houses commanded a higher figure at £1,604 per week. Although there was a 19.4% increase in the number of properties let compared to the same period last year, there was a notable 31.1% decrease from three months ago. Achieved rental values, on the other hand, have shown resilience, registering a 5.8% increase compared to the same period last year and a 1.6% rise versus three months ago. This suggests a sustained demand for rental properties, with landlords enjoying improved returns on their investments.

### A POSITIVE FUTURE FOR THE W2 PROPERTY MARKET

Looking ahead, there are indications that inflation may decrease in the coming year, potentially easing financial



pressures on both buyers and sellers. Additionally, expectations for lower mortgage rates and interest rates could stimulate demand in the property market. These factors may contribute to a more stable and optimistic outlook for W2's real estate landscape.

As economic conditions evolve, keeping an eye on the trends and staying informed will be crucial for anyone navigating the dynamic landscape of W2's property market in the year ahead.

**Chestertons Hyde Park**

Keep up to date with the London property market by visiting: [chestertons.co.uk/en-gb/news](https://www.chestertons.co.uk/en-gb/news) or by contacting Chestertons Hyde Park: [hydepark@chestertons.co.uk](mailto:hydepark@chestertons.co.uk)

# W2 property market has strong start to 2024

The continual regeneration of W2 has made it a first-choice location to live. With hybrid workers who moved out of London in the pandemic now looking for a London base with easy connections to the country, the market shows great promise.

In reaction to softening interest rates, buyers are securing 2-5 year fixed mortgage rates at favourable levels and reacting quickly to anything new that comes to the market. With a shortage of new properties for sale - and prime central London buyer registration up 8% year on year in January 2024 - the gap between supply and demand alone makes this a good time to consider selling.

The W2 lettings market also remains active. Despite upcoming elections and potential policy changes which could see this market subject to change, there has been a strong presence of sellers changing course and entering the lettings market to benefit from rising rental prices. So whether they're buyers or tenants, we are finding people are keen to get moving to find their new prime central London home.



Laura Dam-Villena  
Hyde Park Sales



Sofia Lira Salas  
Hyde Park Lettings

## Recently sold & let in Hyde Park

Our team in Hyde Park offers the best advice on the local market with expertise tailored to your specific needs. Let us help you make your next move.



The Lancasters, W2  
Asking price £2,700,000

SOLD



Craven Hill, W2  
Asking price £1,250 per week

LET

Knight Frank Hyde Park  
1 Craven Terrace  
Hyde Park  
London  
W2 3QD  
[hydepark@knightfrank.com](mailto:hydepark@knightfrank.com)  
020 3944 3534





## Your Letters

We welcome your letters on any subject that might be of interest to the readers of **SEBRA NEWS W2**. Send your contributions to: [editor@sebra.org.uk](mailto:editor@sebra.org.uk) or by post to John Zamit, Chairman (address on page 2). Note that contributions may be subject to minor editorial changes. Please include your full contact details. The writer of the "Star Letter" will receive six bottles of wine.

### WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR RESIDENTS' PARKING SPACES?

**I** don't know if anybody else has noticed this, but there seems to have been a severe reduction in the number of Westminster Residents' Parking Permit spaces available in the Bayswater area, and with it, a commensurate growth in paid for parking spaces.

This shift is especially noticeable where some residents' parking spaces that were located conveniently close to supermarkets, small independent grocery shops, sports and recreational centres and the park have now been substituted with the 'pay as you go' variety. So if you are prepared to pay extra for them, you can still have the convenience of parking closer.

Of course, I shouldn't be surprised by this since it means more money is being poured into the coffers of the local Council, which might, perhaps, be more palatable if I could see what difference it is making to the general upkeep of the local area by Westminster Council. Sadly, I can't!

Against this background it seems it will only be a matter of time before the benefit of having and paying for an annual Westminster Residents' Parking Permit for our cars will become pointless.

**Victor Margiotta**  
Fulton Mews, W2



#### Chairman's Comment

Thank you Victor, you make some very fair points. Residents' parking in Westminster remains a problem, and when it comes to the "pay as you go" spaces they will be getting more expensive too. We cover this on pages 8-10 in Safety Valve.

### A SMOKING PROBLEM ON QUEENSWAY

**I** was passing through the office today and was suddenly assaulted by a strong smell of burning oil or fuel.

On arriving in Queensway, near Bayswater Station, I found that the area was full of thick smoke, which turned out to be coming from a large white street washing van.

The operative was leaning on his hose obviously quite unconcerned that his van was emitting these clouds of smoke, and occasional flashes of fire from its chimney. On enquiring about

the problem (as we good SEBRA people tend to do) he informed us that he had contacted the engineer at the depot and was told to 'let it burn' for 10 minutes to clear the issue.

And indeed, ten minutes later the foul smoke duly cleared. But if anyone wondered what was going on we did find out. I'm pleased to say that the pavements got very well cleaned too.

**Simon Whittle**  
Queensway, W2



### DIGGING DEEP ON A LACK OF HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND

**M**any readers may recall over the last 12 to 18 months that a number of roads and pavements in the SEBRA area were being dug up - all in the name of high speed broadband from G.Network.

At first, the company said: "We are working closely with Westminster Council on specific paperwork requirements that we need to connect your property," but months after placing an order, it has now become apparent that there are problems: "We cannot commit to installing our fibre in your property any time soon." Has SEBRA heard anything about this? Did the left hand know what the right hand was doing? Was all of the disruption and roadwork for nothing?



G.Network installing in London.

I was keen to find out more, and having engaged with both the Council and the company, it looks like there is a bit more of a story here about G.Network pulling out of Bayswater and not following through on the roadworks/pavement digging last year/early this. As is often the case, various folks were pointing the finger of blame at each other.

I really want to get to the bottom of this so I am currently doing a bit more digging. I am planning to write up a short piece on this for your consideration and hopefully publication in a future issue of **SEBRA NEWS W2**.

**Matthew Jones**  
SEBRA Member, W2

#### Chairman's Comment

Thank you Matthew. I know that many members have been frustrated with the roadworks you mention, and we will be very pleased to publish an update from you in a future magazine.



### PUBLIC TOILETS IN WESTMINSTER, AND MAGAZINE PRAISE

The closed public toilets on Bayswater Road at the entrance to Kensington Gardens. "A vital resource".

**D**ear John, I have just been reading the current edition of the **SEBRA NEWS W2**. It really is a magnificent affair, better produced than many national magazines.

One issue that I have been following is the closure of the public conveniences at the southern end of Queensway and the Council's decision not to use the s106 money to make a far more pleasant entrance to the park in that particular location.

One thing that neither this article nor previous articles mention is that now that the three public conveniences have been closed in Kensington Gardens there now only remain the one by the Italian Fountains and the one in the middle of Hyde Park. It really isn't enough.

Maybe there could be an article on why they have closed. Of the three possible authorities who could have been having to maintain them (Westminster, RBK&C or The Royal Parks), none of them are short of money and their refusal to pay a modest amount to upkeep a vital resource in the park which was used by hundreds of thousands of people a year is nothing short of scandalous.

It has also resulted in a far greater amount of human waste in the parks from people who have been caught short and have had nowhere to go.

**Ivo Hesmondhalgh**  
Leinster Gardens, W2

#### Chairman's Comment

Ivo, I totally agree with you on the need for public toilets on our streets and in our parks. Provision of public toilets is not a statutory requirement but it should be.

Westminster Council, under the new Labour administration, reopened a couple that had been closed but that is not nearly enough.

There was talk of closing the very popular public toilets in Queensway at the junction with Westbourne Grove but SEBRA managed to stop that from happening.

The Royal Parks have a limited budget to operate the toilets they have, so they probably would not be keen to open more. However, I suspect they know they are going to have to.

Maybe there is a chance that the toilets at the southern end of the Broadwalk in Kensington Gardens, which have been closed for two years, could be reopened.

As you may have been reading in my "Queensgate" article I am hoping that we will get new gates into Kensington Gardens but I need the Council to deal with the Royal Parks first. Sadly there is no way that we will get toilets back, which is a real shame, as the original plan was to have a new toilet block built like the one at the Italian Gardens.