

THE GREAT DIVIDE



**ISSUE No 116
SPRING 2026**

COUNCIL'S PROPOSAL FOR BAYSWATER ROAD CYCLEWAY SPLITS OPINION

READ OUR NINE-PAGE SPECIAL IN SAFETY VALVE

PLUS A SPECIAL FEATURE ON WESTBOURNE GROVE RETAIL, LOCAL ELECTIONS AND MANY OTHER SUBJECTS IN ANOTHER GREAT ISSUE

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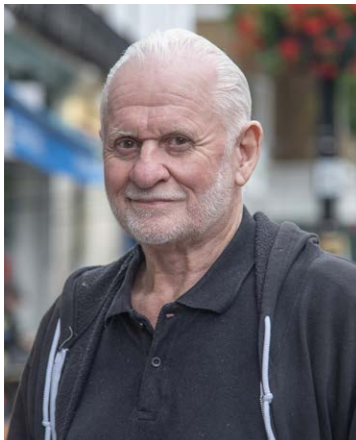
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From the Chairman

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Save the Date!
 SEBRA Summer Garden Party:
 Monday 6 July
 Cleveland Gardens Square

With so much to feature in our Spring 2026 issue, including nine pages on our cover story and a pair of double-page restaurant reviews, it's back to just one page for "From the Chairman". So, without further ado, let us get started.

THE GREAT DIVIDE



A "floating bus stop" in Central London.

Our coverage of the proposed cycleway emphasises the strong feelings expressed by many members on the subject, with the so-called "floating bus stops" being of particular concern.

"I have never seen a cyclist stop for a pedestrian at a cycleway zebra crossing" is what I am hearing time and time again.

Those in favour of the proposed cycleway say it will be much safer for cyclists and believe that concerns expressed by those against it are either exaggerated or unfounded.

There were over 2,500 responses to the Council's consultation. We await the detailed analysis, and it will be interesting to discover how many of those who replied were part of lobby groups.

THIS COUNCIL IS NOT FOR TURNING

Almost every day it seems you hear of another U-turn from this government.

Here in Westminster, it seems the situation is quite the opposite. To the man in the street, it would appear that there are countless consultations and further consultations, but ultimately the Council does what it always wanted to do.



Mrs Thatcher – also never did U-turns.

For example, in SEBRALAND, there was a recent consultation on highway improvements along Westbourne Grove. The three locally-recognised amenity groups attended a number of meetings to express our serious concerns on several aspects of the proposals.

The Council then published the results of the consultation and stated they were proceeding with their original plans.

We are now left with a rearguard action to get them to see sense before the proposals are implemented.

CRYSTAL BALL FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS



We understand that the Green Party and ReformUK, alongside Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, will be fielding candidates in Westminster for the local elections on 7 May.

Whilst the Greens and ReformUK candidates may not win any seats, the defection of votes from the Conservative and Labour candidates will greatly affect the outcome.

The three Wards in SEBRALAND, along with the West End Ward, are crucial for any party to win control of Westminster.

Your guess is as good as mine on the final outcome, although if you ask the

Conservative Party and the Labour Party candidates, they both say, "canvassing is going very well." I have quoted Mandy Rice-Davies on my page before, and I shall do so again: "They would say that, wouldn't they?"

Whilst the recent seismic result at the Gorton & Denton by-election might not repeat itself in Westminster, the local elections are certainly going to make headlines. We will be sending you details of all candidates standing nearer the time.

PROGRESS ON QUEENSWAY PARADE



The cheap souvenir shops have now gone.

At last, the cheap souvenir shops between Nos. 114 to 150 on Queensway have all gone, along with the large Tesco Express. This all makes way for the large Vabel development to start, with demolition due in early April.

The whole project – 94 apartments, of which 35 are affordable housing, plus shop units on the ground floor – is due to take around three years.

THAT'S ALL FROM ME

I hope you enjoy reading the magazine. Thanks, as ever, go to our Editor, our contributors, and our advertisers – old and new – for another great issue.

Don't forget to use your vote on 7 May. Best wishes,

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The Editor Writes - Miscellaneous Notes from the Farm

The brown fields are where they want to put houses. Locals are not keen.



Regulars will know two things about my page. Firstly, I like to get it done and dusted fairly soon because things get pretty busy as we approach publication. Secondly, I like to write it in a local hostelry, as I find that a fine ale gets the literary juices moving.

As I write, the date is 23 January, so that's the first box ticked, and as we approach *Burns Night* I am currently supping a pint of "Auld Acquaintance" from the Loch Lomond Brewery. I've always been fond of Scotland and the Scottish people, so I feel I'm doing my bit, albeit 448 miles from the second most famous loch in the British Isles.

SAD NEWS, BUT A GREAT QUOTE.

We start with the sad news that our adopted pet, *Mrs Wilberforce* (otherwise known as next door's cat, as featured last time), has... well, let's just say we didn't need to buy her too many more tins of Whiskas.

She was very old, and we looked after her very well before she "slipped the surly bonds of earth". Farewell, Mrs Wilberforce, but well done me for getting in that fabulous line from the poem "High Flight" by John Gillespie Magee.

It's a quote I know well because it featured in a speech by Peggy Noonan, written for Ronald Reagan when he addressed the nation after the Space Shuttle *Challenger* disaster. If you have two minutes, please watch the speech on *YouTube*; it is spectacularly good, and I guarantee that line will bring a lump to your throat.

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

Well, our little Parish Council is at the heart of a campaign to stop 250 houses being built in Wellington. We don't mind houses, but we do mind houses that set a precedent of being built on the south side of the main road that borders the town.

The word "floodgates" has appeared many times in objections from local residents. My guess, brought about by those who know far more than me, is that planning will be turned down, the developers will appeal, and Somerset Council won't want to spend money fighting the appeal. So much for democracy, but I shall report again in summer.

ADVERTISING MAKES IT HAPPEN

We thank our advertisers in every issue and many mailings; they pay for the magazine, and it is good to see some new businesses advertising this time around. Also, there's a welcome return to the advertisement opposite, which I just love, and if you have any computer problems, please do consider getting in touch with Miguel.

SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON

A good friend of mine once told me that his personal hero was Sir Ernest Shackleton, and he recommended that I read *Endurance* by Alfred Lansing, which chronicles his ill-fated voyage of 1914-1917. Well, it took me a decade to get round to doing so, but I was gripped from cover to cover. What a story of survival, and never was the word *hero* more appropriate.

I was in fact so hooked on the tale that I picked up another Shackleton book, which gave a wider view of his life and his two other Antarctic voyages, in addition to the final one. As the saying goes, "They don't make 'em like that any more."



Sir Ernest Shackleton. (1874-1922). A true hero with a true hero's haircut.

So next time I see my friend (possibly this summer, as he's bought a pub in Dartmouth), we shall discuss the great man, and I shall also drop an email to Professor Lewis Lesley, asking if we might expand the *Blue Plaques* series to SE26 in the Borough of Lewisham, where he lived as a child.

NOTES FROM THE FARM?

"Surely Editor Steve hasn't bought a farm", I hear you say. Well no, but I have decent wellies, two freezers, some fruit trees, one of those things that you whack fence posts in with, cows in the adjoining orchard, and the whole place often smells fairly "rural". That's pretty much farming in my book. Also, I couldn't think of another title for this issue's ramble.

Anyway, happy reading everyone.



Yes, that's me - Miguel - always with Apple on my mind.

Having an Apple problem?

Is your Apple Mac not behaving the way you want it to? With more than 25 years of experience, your Apple Mac is in very good hands when properly looked after by me. I am always happy to talk, please reach out for a chat!

Miguel de Sousa Pires

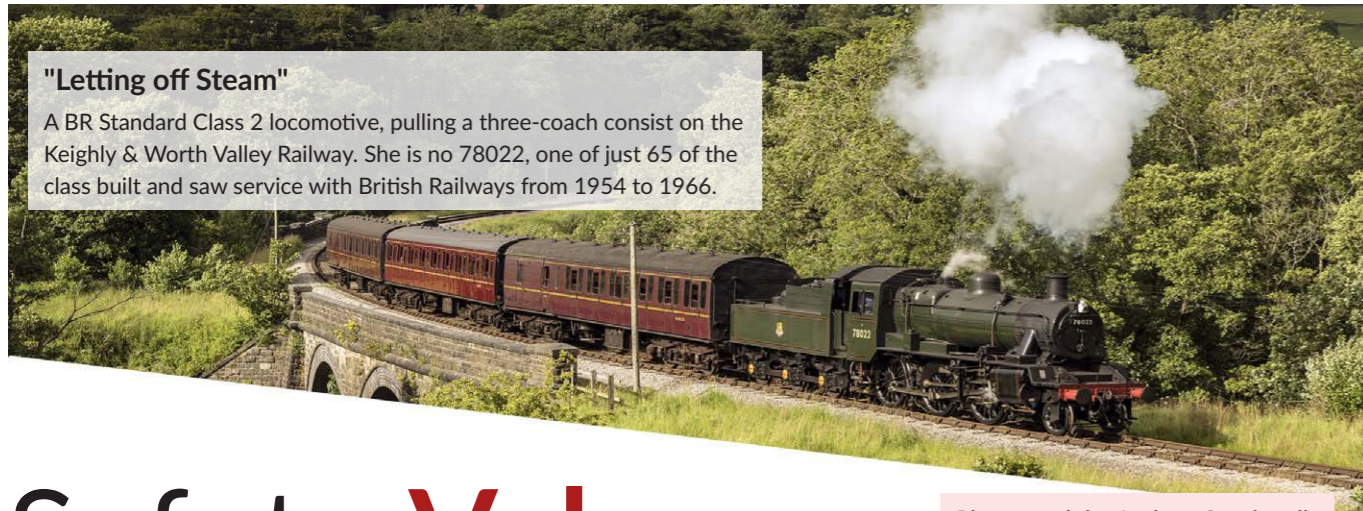


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"Letting off Steam"

A BR Standard Class 2 locomotive, pulling a three-coach consist on the Keighly & Worth Valley Railway. She is no 78022, one of just 65 of the class built and saw service with British Railways from 1954 to 1966.



Safety Valve

Photograph by Andrew Southwell.
Visit: bit.ly/sebra-southwell

One story dominates Safety Valve this time around, and as you will probably have guessed, it's the one which we've dedicated our "Great Divide" cover to.

The proposed cycleway would represent a huge change to the road that borders SEBRALAND to the south, and you can read nine pages on the subject, featuring articles, press

coverage and members' opinions on pages 16 to 24. The cycleway is by no means the only story in this section though, with plenty of people letting off steam on a wide range of subjects. Some of them are new, some of them are old favourites, but all worthy of inclusion here.

Once again, we thank everyone who took the time to write.

FOUR YEARS ON - TIME TO REPAIR THE BROADWALK

As a regular visitor to Kensington Gardens it saddens me to see that the scar in the Broadwalk, which I believe is as a result of supplying electricity to The Whiteley, is now worse than ever.

This eyesore has been in place for four years now, and given that The

Whiteley is now 'open for business', I think it is high time that The Royal Parks made good the repair and laid the appropriate surface.

Perhaps SEBRA could contact The Royal Parks on this matter.

Sophie Massey Cook
Bark Place, W2

Comment from Andy Williams, Park Manager

Resurfacing the Broad Walk remains on the long list of maintenance projects for The Royal Parks but it is subject to prioritisation against other projects across all the parks.

We continue to invest heavily in Kensington Gardens, as well as elsewhere across the Royal Parks estate, whilst balancing our available resources. For example, we are investing significantly at the Diana, Princess of Wales' Memorial Playground, in new landscape maintenance contractor accommodation and in the renewing of the Kensington Gardens Leaf Yard, where all green waste from Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, St James's Park and Brompton Cemetery is processed.

Health and safety compliance or an operational need does mean that some projects take precedence over others.

As Park Manager I will continue to press for these works to take place, but I cannot give any guarantees.

Left: A tarmac scar bisects one of Kensington Gardens' busiest thoroughfares.



HIGHLIGHTING THE DANGERS OF E-BIKE BATTERIES

If you live in a block of flats or a converted building you may, like us, have been inundated recently with reams of paper and emails describing how the management is complying with the post Grenfell legislation to mitigate fire risk.

This is all well and good but are they so focussed on the past that they're missing the biggest present danger? None of them address e-bike recharging within flats, yet the London Fire Brigade reports that e-bikes and e-scooters are one of the fastest growing fire risks. Apparently there is a fire involving one of them every other day, often when being recharged and unsupervised.

It is highly likely that bikes and scooters are being recharged overnight inside flats, or, as I discovered, and even more dangerous ... in the corridor! But they have to be recharged somewhere and as things stand there is no alternative. Maybe our managers could also be addressing the main present fire threat, by providing outdoor charging facilities for bikes and scooters.

It would be a straightforward matter of extending the cabling to a suitable position, but there are a couple of problems to solve for those who live in residential blocks. Bikes need to be kept from public view otherwise they become



thief magnets, but when they're left in private areas they tend to congregate into an unsightly litter.

The apparent answer to both – lock them in a basement storeroom – despite two decades of laudable effort from our RMC, has proved stubbornly ineffective.

So if anyone has found a bike storage solution that would allow for external recharging of e-bikes and scooters or knows of one, please share it. The availability of e-bike hire has lessened but not eliminated the danger, and it seems to me that only the provision of free outdoor charging will insure against someone in SEBRALAND in the not-too-distant future becoming a victim of one of the fastest growing fire risks in London.

Joe Ogden

Detaching batteries from e-bikes might not be commonplace in residential blocks.

Editor's Comment

It appears that Joe has made a valid point here, and his experience suggests that people are not detaching batteries from their bikes when charging them. They certainly are fairly hefty things, and not ideal for carrying up flights of stairs.

The fire risk is probably small, but it is still a real one, so it may be that people don't want to bring that risk into their home.

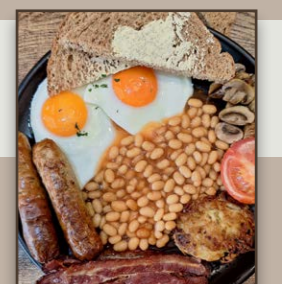
Perhaps management companies should be giving some serious thought to this issue and look at implementing what Joe suggests.



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CLEVELAND TERRACE DOCKLESS E-BIKE BAYS AND NEWS ON CHANGES TO THE NO 46 BUS ROUTE STOPS

We received the letters below in relation to Cleveland Terrace, in connection with the redundant No 205 bus stand being replaced with dockless e-Bike parking. (see page 16 of our last issue).

Councillor Max Sullivan, Cabinet Member for Streets has replied on this subject, and his reply is included here. That reply first addresses the related subject changes to stops on the No 46 bus route.

I have just come back from a month away to find half of Cleveland Terrace filled up with what looks like paving slabs. I presume that this is in readiness for the proposed cycle lane works programmed for the vicinity?

It does seem ages ago that you and Domenic [Ed: Domenic Pedino, who was copied in and writes on the same subject below] toured the area and agreed upon a sensible plan for which implementation we have been patiently waiting.

What can you tell me please

Trevor Davison
SEBRA Member, W2

So I was wondering/hoping that our promised, simple removal of the dockless e-Bike parking bay from the current location to the agreed location across the junction towards Eastbourne Terrace was included in these works?

I completely agree with Trevor's concern that no action has been taken since our walking tour last summer. I raised the issue with Joe Powell last week.

In addition to the dockless e-Bike parking bay (the largest one in Lancaster Gate Ward), the cycle hanger, it is now being used as a builder's yard!

Councillors, can Cleveland Terrace stop being used as a dumping ground? Can residents be prioritised rather than cyclists? Can we be given some respite from the continued onslaught?

This small piece of road, should not be the default solution to every cycle initiative at the expense of people living here.

Domenic Pendino
SEBRA Member, W2



Cleveland Terrace "... should not be the default solution".

Response from Bayswater Ward Councillor Max Sullivan Cabinet Member for Streets

I will do my best to clear up any confusion about where the No 46 bus is stopping in the area. As a reminder, TfL proposed reducing the number of stops around Paddington to better line up with current bus operations.

We support this reduction in the bus stop footprint, as it has the potential to make interchanges easier and give space for other uses. Based on the information provided by TfL the first stop of the No 46 bus is now on Eastbourne Terrace (Bus Stop W), which is near to the entry/exit to the Elizabeth Line and Paddington Station generally – this should ease the concern about a difficult interchange from rail/tube to this bus. (continues...)

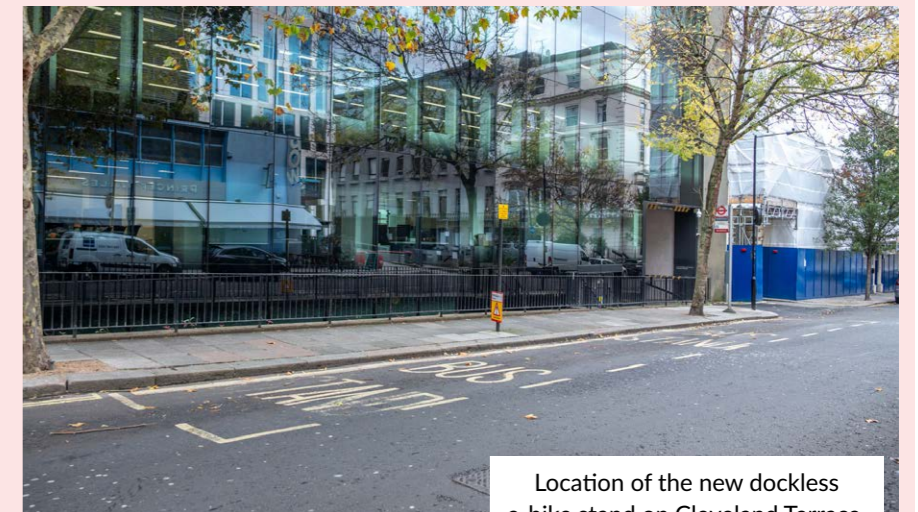


Stops on the No 46 bus route have changed.

London Buses
From Saturday 20 December 2025
Changes to bus routes 46 and N205
We're changing the route of some buses around Paddington. For routes 46 or N205 - please use alternative bus stops:
Changes to routes 46 and N205 around Paddington
For route 46 towards St Bart's Hospital
For route N205 towards St Bart's Hospital
For route 46 towards Paddington
For route N205 towards Paddington
For route 46 towards Leyton, Downwell Road
For route N205 towards Leyton, Downwell Road
Key
Route 46 towards Paddington
Route N205 towards St Bart's Hospital
Route 46 towards Paddington
Route N205 towards Paddington
Route 46 towards Leyton, Downwell Road
Route N205 towards Leyton, Downwell Road
Bus stop - closed
Walking route
Check your travel at tfl.gov.uk/buses

The TfL website contains details of the No 46 bus route changes.

(...continued) The next stop is Bishop's Bridge Road (Bus Stop M), followed by Harrow Road (Bus Stop S). These changes were implemented by TfL to improve the boarding and alighting arrangements for the No 46 route. As you kindly published in a previous issue, subject to consultation we plan



Location of the new dockless e-bike stand on Cleveland Terrace.

to proceed with a new shared eBike/ eScooter bay at the previous bus stand for the No 205 on Cleveland Terrace, which is not needed any longer for bus services. Around Paddington Station bikes can accumulate particularly in the commuter peaks, and this will help.

We are also planning a further one of these bays on Eastbourne Terrace, where a number of Pay to Park spaces are proposed to be removed to make

space for the Route 16 buses (at Bus Stop E). Both of these new bays – alongside our on-the-spot fines to Lime and Forest which is spurring them into action – will help to keep bikes in bays, not in the way. Including out of the way of people trying to catch a bus. The Traffic Management Order consultation for these proposed bays is set to commence later in the summer.

NEEDHAM ROAD BARRIERS - A BLIGHT FOR OVER SEVEN YEARS

These ugly barriers on Needham Road have been the subject of a dispute for over seven years now.

- They take up parking spaces
- Create a potential hazard in the street
- Are a visual eyesore for residents
- And are a blight on the small businesses there

The WCC officers involved are frustrated about it. The resident next to the works is frustrated about it. Both sides seem to have different views about what needs to happen next.

Needham Road has recently had some trees added. We hope more will be done to improve the street as time and money allows.

Please can Westminster City Council get everyone together in a room and not let anyone leave until the situation is resolved?

It would be hugely appreciated.

Penny Bagnell-Smith
Local resident, W2



The seven-year itch? It is time to see the back of these barriers.

Chairman's Response

Thank you for getting in touch Penny, and for bringing in to *Safety Valve* a location that has featured in my *Dirty Dozen* series for a long time now.

The latest on Needham Road can be found on page 61, and please rest assured that I share your frustration with this particular blot on the area.

THE BIG STORY - RAISED CYCLEWAY PROPOSAL FOR BAYSWATER ROAD

CGI from Westminster City Council.



Chairman's Introduction

When I read about the plans for a raised cycleway along Bayswater Road I knew that they would be controversial. I also knew that it was important that our members were informed, so I sent a mailing to make them aware of what was being proposed.

The mailing is shown below, and as you will see it included my personal thoughts on the subject and pointed members in the direction of the consultation website. It also advised that they could submit comments. I asked for those leaving comments to send their thoughts to me too, so that I could take those comments on board when submitting SEBRA's official response. That response is on page 23 in this section.

Over these pages we have included all of the comments which were sent to me, and it has to be said that most who

got in touch were against the proposals. The primary concern from members being that floating bus stops place passengers (particularly the old and infirm) in danger. I share that view.

Floating bus stops have recently made the news *The Standard* ran an article on the proposal for Bayswater Road and *The Telegraph* wrote on the subject in early January. Both articles are summarised later in this section.

Furthermore there are articles from SEBRA Members **Nick Ross** and **Andy Beverley**. Nick is a former Chair of RoSPA's Road Safety Committee and is against the scheme. Andy is in favour, he is passionate about active transport, and whilst we might disagree on this matter, I certainly respect his opinions.

We conclude the section with comment from Bayswater Ward Councillor Max Sullivan, who is Cabinet Member for Streets.

MAILING TO MEMBERS - 11 JANUARY 2026

Subject: Bayswater Road Raised Cycle Lanes Proposal - Public Drop-In Events

Dear SEBRA Member

Westminster City Council has proposed major alterations to Bayswater Road (between Lancaster Terrace and the Broadwalk), involving substantial changes to the existing cycle lanes.

On a personal basis I have strong reservations about what is being proposed.

Primarily I think that the design is ill-conceived, and that the multiple levels will present a real danger to pedestrians, bus users, cyclists and vehicles using the road.

At dusk, and in the evening, that danger will be greater still, when visibility drops. Especially as all pedestrians, including those with limited mobility and older people, will have to cross the cycle lanes when using the bus stop islands.

Our friends at BRA - The Bayswater Residents' Association, have come out fighting, and our thanks go to them for allowing us to use their mailing to members as seen below. Their objections are both well-reasoned and comprehensive.

This is a complex proposal, and I urge members to attend the public drop-in events (dates highlighted below). I also encourage members to complete the questionnaire, via this link.

Please also let SEBRA know your views by emailing chairman@sebra.org.uk.

OVER 2,500 RESPONSES

The consultation closed on 4 February with over 2,500 responses having been received. This certainly reflects the communications sent by SEBRA and BRA, but social media was very active too, with Westminster Cycling Campaign encouraging their followers to respond as can be seen in the screenshot below.



The Council will now analyse the consultation responses and we await further information to find out if the scheme will go ahead.

CULTURE WARS COME TO BAYSWATER

A scheme to constrict traffic in Bayswater Road pitches cyclists against motorists. Here **Nick Ross**, local resident and also a pedestrian, bus passenger, car driver, cab user and (increasingly less because of age, a cyclist) explains why the Bayswater Residents' Association and others are opposed.

Make no mistake. This would transform the whole length of Bayswater Road. It would cause substantial traffic jams (which proponents only furtively confess) and be embarrassingly expensive (hence the secrecy over costs). Nor is there published evidence that it would cut death or injury to cyclists.

Safety is key, and I speak as a former chair of RoSPA's National Road Safety Committee, still-active in accident prevention and a cyclist myself (albeit less now I'm in my 70s). Unquestionably segregating cyclists from motor traffic saves lives. But not at any price – financial costs, environmental harm or through displacement.

The merits of road safety are measured in VPFs (Value of a Prevented Fatality), currently £2.5m. Yet this proposal is driven by ideology, even zealotry, without published calculations to justify the outlay or disruption. No evidence is cited that this stretch is especially risky. Nor are we offered quieter, intrinsically safer east-west routes where junctions – the greatest danger to cyclists – could be improved. Incidentally, nor is this claimed to be more cost-effective than

tackling other dangers: lack of helmets (which can prevent a third of deaths and two-thirds of serious brain injuries), no lights or conspicuity at night (fatal outcomes double in the dark), better adherence to the Highway Code.... Nor have proponents admitted maintenance costs will rise, at our expense, by 20–40%.

Meanwhile they speak with forked tongue about congestion. Publicly they promise only a "0–1 minute change to motor vehicle times" ("change" - they can't bring themselves to say "delay"), yet privately a Councillor pushing hardest told me he hopes congestion will force cars off the road. He may be right. When one lane of Bayswater Road was embargoed (thanks to Thames Water) eastbound jams stretched almost to Notting Hill Gate. And see the relentless tailbacks at Lancaster Gate. It's residents who will suffer from bottlenecks outside our homes. And delays cost everyone. The INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard ranks London Europe's most congested city and with yet more loss of road space the

Centre for Economics and Business Research warns delays will make us poorer by £10bn in 2030.

Jams are also horribly polluting. Vehicles are least efficient at low speeds or idling. Nitrogen Oxides (NOx), Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀), Carbon Monoxide (CO) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) would likely rise by 30%, doubling at peak times, poisoning the air for residents and pedestrians – and, ironically, especially those at exhaust-pipe level, like me on a bike. CO₂ would also increase so much for going green.

Most proposals have some merit. But this scheme is being imposed without nuance or serious consideration of alternatives. It privileges one group at the expense of others.

As voters, and residents' associations, we might reasonably warn our local representatives that we will campaign against the re-election of any Councillor who supports it.

Nick Ross, W2



MEMBERS' COMMENTS AGAINST THE RAISED CYCLEWAY PROPOSALS

I have just become aware of the proposal to narrow the Bayswater Road by constructing bus stop islands separated from the pavement. I am shocked that this ill-judged spendthrift 'plan' is being considered by Westminster Council. I object to it most strongly.

I am a local resident. I am already anxious every time I have to cross Bayswater Road at the crossing closest to Lancaster

Gate - whether going to the park, catching the bus for Notting Hill or returning on the bus from central London. The crossing is guarded by traffic lights, but, even today, cyclists frequently ignore the red light and swoop past without stopping.

Dr Elizabeth Meinhard, W2

I have submitted my comments on the public consultation already, but wanted to add a point to you that arose when discussing it with my adult children who all cycle in London.

They feel less safe in a bike lane with a raised kerb delineating it than they do in a cycle lane with a painted line. This is because when there are other bikes going at different speeds, one bike can easily push another into the kerb causing an accident. Both have seen this happen often. With the E-bikes racing around in this area, often with tourists unused to

London and cycling, they think it will be more dangerous with the proposed segregated bike lane than it is now. They would themselves elect to cycle through the park/on a quieter route at busy times and are happy with the bike lane marked on the Bayswater Road as is on less busy times.

I hope SEBRA might be able to make this point to the consultation as I seem unable to add anything to my comments!

SEBRA Member, W2



MEMBERS' COMMENTS IN FAVOUR OF THE RAISED CYCLEWAY PROPOSALS

I was very disappointed to see SEBRA following the erroneous opinion of another RA on the topic of cycle lanes on Bayswater Road. These cycle lanes will increase the safety for all vulnerable road users.

By increasing the number of cycle journeys, by people who will now feel safe cycling, the number of vehicles on the roads will be reduced and everyone will be safer. The risk of a pedestrian being seriously injured by a cyclist in a collision is orders of magnitude lower than by a vehicle, and cyclists

are more careful than car drivers to avoid such collisions in which they too would be injured.

The footways of Bayswater Road have plenty of space for increases of pedestrian numbers, and the carriageway space can be reallocated to cycle lanes without significant compromise to bus journey times. The cycleways proposed by WCC should be supported.

Helen Jones, W2

I completed the questionnaire before and wrote that I was unsure about the raised aspect although I am in favour of the cycle lanes.

As you know I'm a cyclist and it's extremely welcome having the demarcation for cycling which makes it safer on this busy road (except on Sundays when Cars can park there, but

it's nice having the art on the railings). I rather agree with your reservations. It doesn't seem a particularly good use of public funds to create the raised up bits. I'd much rather see Lancaster Gate station not closing.

SEBRA Member, W2

I believe that the new segregated cycle lanes will be a significant improvement for the community. From what I can tell, the proposals are actually very thoroughly thought through.

They improve pedestrian crossings. The way the floating bus stops are designed is also in line with the best safety recommendations: they are separated only by a single-direction cycle lane, they have zebra crossings, and the crossings are equipped with tactile paving.

While you may perceive this as a danger, the data does not bear this out, and very few accidents happen at floating bus stops. The increased safety to cyclists and the associated

benefits for all residents, including quieter, less polluted streets outweigh by far the drawbacks.

Incidentally, I share your concern about missing reinforcement of speeding and running red lights for all road users. If we can get more decent people to cycle without fear of being run over by cars, cycling etiquette will improve.

As a responsible cyclist myself, I'm looking forward to a future with more segregated cycle lanes and a thriving low-pollution community!

Thank you for reminding me of the drop-in consultation — I will make sure to say hello and make my point!

SEBRA Member, W2

I saw your statement as the Chairman of SEBRA regarding the proposed changes to Bayswater Road and I wanted to let you know that I was really disappointed by it. I feel you are completely unaware of what some of your members want even if they are different to your views.

The statement was completely opinion based and lacking supportive evidence to back up your claims- that has actually shown positive outcomes of this type of scheme in other areas.

As Chairman I believe that personal views should be kept to yourself and this should have been an opportunity to

find out what your members thought about the scheme. It would have allowed you to feedback to the Council a true representation of what SEBRA members are thinking about the scheme, instead you have alienated yourself from people being honest with you.

As the Chairman you should be providing opinions to the relevant people that illustrates the thoughts of your members. I hope you take this into consideration when feeding back to Westminster City Council where SEBRA stands on this scheme.

Zoe Birch, W2

Reply to Zoe from John Zamit

Zoe, thank you for your email regarding the mailing of 11 January, and I also thank you for agreeing for it to be published in this magazine.

Whilst I did make it very clear that I was expressing a personal opinion, I understand and respect your view that the mailing should have focused on the consultation facts and encourage feedback, rather than emphasising personal opinions.

GIVING BACK FREEDOMS

The Case for Cycleways - By Andy Beverley

LOSS OF FREEDOM

Over the past few decades there has been an unprecedented attack on children's freedom.

The causes and types are many and varied, but ultimately all driven by technological advancements.

Of recent this has been in the form of smartphones: teenagers continuously observe each other through social media, whilst parents are omnipresent in the form of instant messaging and location tracking.

The rise of the motor car, whilst initially purporting freedom, has resulted in the exact opposite: just a few decades ago, it would have been normal for pre-teenage children to get around entirely independently, but not today. It's not just that it's hard to cross roads – it's now hard to cycle on them when there's so much traffic.

The above musings won't come as a surprise to most people, and even writing as someone in his 40s, the loss of freedom since I was a child is marked.

I hear stories from older generations as to how they were out for whole days on their bikes as children, with their parents not knowing where they were. More recently, during my childhood in the 90s, at 11 years old I was cycling to piano lessons on my own and going to the swimming pool independently to meet friends.

REVERSING THE TREND

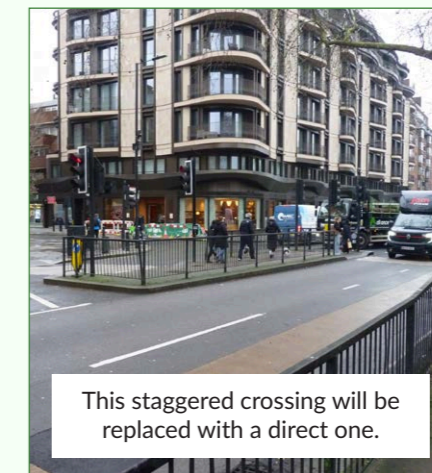
People are beginning to recognise these problems: it is no longer unusual to question whether children should even have access to a smartphone or

whether to be tracked on one. London is slowly turning the tide, and is giving some freedoms back to children for travel. Around large areas of London, parents can begin to allow their children to walk or cycle to school or activities, with the provision of protected cycle lanes and neighbourhoods of low traffic. Until now, however, West Central London has been behind many other parts of inner-London.

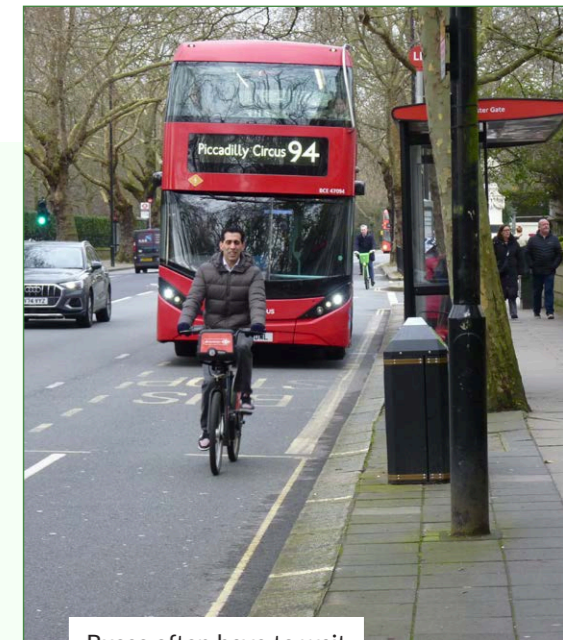
This leads me onto the latest excellent proposals for Bayswater Road. The plans include proper protection for those choosing to cycle, including teenagers and children (back roads are not an alternative, often also being too dangerous).

PEDESTRIANS BENEFIT TOO

There are real benefits for pedestrians. For example the main carriageway will be narrower, encouraging slower speeds of motor vehicles, whilst the 1970s-style pedestrian crossing near Queensway (making pedestrians wait in multiple stages) is being replaced with a direct crossing.



This staggered crossing will be replaced with a direct one.



Buses often have to wait to be able to pull-in.

BEST-PRACTICE APPROACH

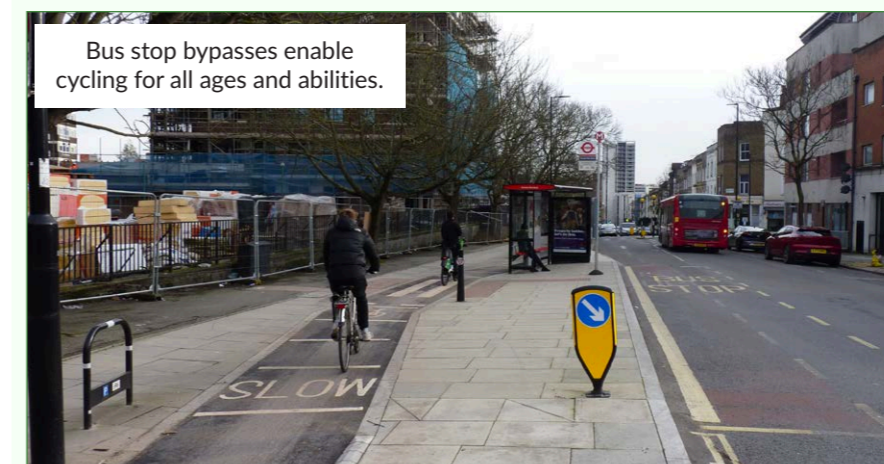
Bus stop bypasses will physically separate bicycles and motor traffic. Without them, cyclists risk still being hit by buses pulling in and out. The proposals are the only physically-possible solution, meaning that bus users sometimes need to cross a cycle lane. But a bus user will always need to cross a road with motor traffic at some point in their travels, even if only for the return journey.

The bypasses are as per latest design recommendations, including zebra crossings across the cycle lane and tactile paving. Pedestrians wait for cyclists to give way, just like they would with motor traffic on a road. There are many hundreds of these types of crossings not just in London but around the world, where they are widely-recognised to be best-practice. This approach is also a win for bus users, who otherwise travel in a slower bus that needs to wait for a bicycle to be able to pull-in.

YOUNG PEOPLE WANT THIS

No doubt there will be other opinion pieces in this magazine from those who do not want change. I would challenge any of those people: did you enjoy these freedoms as a child, and if so how would you give the same freedom to today's children?

In any case, it's clear to me what today's future generation wants. If you don't know, then I suggest you ask someone young what their opinion is of these proposals. Who are we to deny it?



Bus stop bypasses enable cycling for all ages and abilities.



From the Leader

Councillor Adam Hug
Leader, Westminster City Council

A FINAL MESSAGE BEFORE THE ELECTIONS ON 7 MAY

This is a particularly significant column for me for two reasons – it is the last SEBRA NEWS W2 issue before the May elections and an opportunity for me to update you with important news on our Budget.

Like other inner London local authorities, Westminster City Council is facing significant financial pressures.

But due to strong financial management, reinventing the way the Council works and our track record of delivering outstanding services that are value for money, we can keep on target with a string of major investments to make life better for residents. At Full Council earlier this month (March 4), we voted to freeze the main element of Council Tax while putting forward an increase of two per cent for the adult social care precept – the money that supports elderly and vulnerable residents.

That means that for a Band D householder, the Westminster part of their Council Tax bill will go up by just 20p a week this year.

At the same time, careful cost control means we can press on with a big programme of investment in affordable housing, hubs for families and community projects including pressing on with the work to improve high streets across Paddington and Bayswater.

The Government's newly announced Overnight Visitor Levy also has the ability to provide significant new funds to help manage the impact of the visitor economy on residents in Westminster. While the operational details are being finalised it's worth noting that a mere 1.5% charge on overnight stays in our borough would be likely to generate £50



Tackling anti-social behaviour in Westminster. **Above:** Out with PACTT officers. **Below:** CCTV monitoring, an important tool in the fight against crime



million per year that could be reinvested locally, so we are working with other London boroughs to make the case for the maximum amount of funding to be retained by the Council.

The other major cross-Westminster news has been the launch of the Council's new Police and Council Tasking Team - or PACTT - which is made up of nine ASB specialist City Inspectors and nine Metropolitan police officers funded by the Council. We have launched this team with the sole aim of tackling anti-social behaviour and crime that most impacts residents. The PACTT officers are on patrol across Westminster and only last month were involved in the recent clearance of land at 210 Gloucester Terrace after a small camp of people had

gathered there, sparking complaints of anti-social behaviour among residents.

To help give the PACTT, our City Inspectors and local police more powers to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in the area also I'm pleased that the new ASB Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) is now in force across Westminster covering drug use, urination/defecation, failing to surrender alcohol on request, loitering and street harassment and the power to enable dispersal when directed by an officer. This will enable £100 fines to be issued by Fixed Penalty Notices which then escalate if not complied with.

Let me now turn to some local issues which I know are of continuing interest to readers.



The consultation for Bayswater Road cycleways saw a large public response.

CYCLE LANES

As you may have read, the Council's recent consultation on Bayswater Road received a total of 2,551 responses either online, via emails or physical letters, from both local residents and groups beyond Westminster campaigning both for and against the concept.

This initial consultation was intended to gather local community feedback to help refine and further develop the design of a potential scheme, using vital local knowledge to identify areas of concern to be addressed. The information provided is very important to inform revisions to any future proposals and the highways team have committed to fully respond to concerns that local people may have.

After that work has been done the potential scheme will go out to a full further consultation provisionally to be held towards the end of the year with any final decision, pending further resident feedback, not due until 2027.

Work will start soon on the Westbourne Terrace cycle movement scheme which will provide a safer route linking the A40 Westway and C27 north of Hyde Park. These works will deliver a new cycle lane in both directions on Westbourne Terrace, as well as junction and footway upgrades along the route. The works will span Westbourne Terrace, from the intersection with Harrow Road down to the intersection with Craven Road. Works are scheduled to start this month and finish in October 2026.

CYCLE HANGARS

A consultation on locations at Leinster Terrace and Kildare Gardens closed at the beginning of this month. The previous decision on Kildare Gardens had been to relocate the hangar following reported incidents. However, as these incidents now appear to have stopped, there is an option to retain the existing provision and add additional hangars at this location.

Following scrutiny and feedback from residents/stakeholders, an alternative arrangement for Leinster Terrace has been identified. The proposed approach is to combine and relocate the hangar users and the micro-mobility bay to Craven Hill Gardens. A final decision on installations is anticipated at the end of this month or early April, subject to consideration of the consultation responses and the final resident report.



Cycle hangar incidents appear to have stopped on Kildare Gardens.

OXFORD STREET

On the subject of consultations, that brings me to developments on **Oxford Street**. As you will have seen, the Mayor and Transport for London have confirmed their decision to proceed with pedestrianising the section of Oxford Street between Selfridges and Oxford Circus. They have also confirmed with their decision on changes to the end point of the No 7 and No 94 bus routes despite strong opposition from the Council around these amendments.



Oxford Street pedestrianisation has been confirmed.

In a more positive step for residents in SEBRALAND, I am delighted that Penny Bagnall-Smith, who chairs both the neighbouring Notting Hill East Neighbourhood Forum and the pan-Westminster forum of residents' groups (WASF), has been able to join the board of the Oxford Street Development Corporation as one of Westminster Council's nominated places, joining Geoff Barraclough and me in trying to ensure local voices are heard around future decision-making on the street.

SEBRA'S LOCAL HIGH STREETS

While Oxford Street and the West End are of course incredibly important, we want to ensure shoppers and visitors have reasons to go elsewhere in the borough. And that brings me to our **retail plans** for the SEBRA area.

We have just published retail strategies for Bayswater High Street, Praed Street and Edgware Road. They provide a detailed assessment of each high street's current condition, use and the priorities of residents and businesses. Together, they offer a robust evidence base for considering how these areas could evolve to meet community needs and identify the types of occupiers that could help bring in more shoppers.

As you will have seen feasibility designs for Praed Street, Westbourne Grove and Fiveways are now making progress after consultation. We are incorporating feedback and comments into the design process from the resident engagement and including helpful feedback from SEBRA. I share the Chairman's desire to move swiftly forward in delivering the project which is now moving at pace to help improve SEBRA's high streets and with an opportunity for residents to have a final say in the coming months.



From the Leader of the Opposition

Councillor Paul Swaddle OBE
Leader, Westminster Conservative Group

A CONSERVATIVE PLAN FOR WESTMINSTER

TAKING CRIME AND STREET SAFETY SERIOUSLY

In SEBRALAND and across Westminster, crime is heading in the wrong direction, and Westminster Labour has failed to get a grip.

Phone snatching, public disorder, robbery, shoplifting and criminal damage have all gone up under Westminster Labour's watch. Businesses tell me shoplifting has become relentless and staff are being left to deal with intimidation that should never be tolerated. I saw this first hand when speaking to shopkeepers and counter staff on Queensway before Christmas.

With Labour running the Council and Sadiq Khan in charge at City Hall, too much rule breaking has been ignored and Westminster feels less safe as a result.

A growing share of local crime is drug related, yet Labour has been too slow and too soft in response. When serious drug related activity was linked to a flat near Chepstow Road, it was Westminster Conservatives that pushed for action while Labour Councillors sat on their hands.

Local people do not want grand speeches or flashy headlines. They want practical action that makes streets safe.

That starts with consequences for repeat antisocial behaviour and consistent enforcement. It means using every power the Council has to support policing and keep neighbourhoods safe, instead of blaming others for Westminster Labour's weak delivery. When enforcement is inconsistent, the message to offenders is simple: there are no consequences.



Queensway - "Shoplifting has become relentless".

If elected in May 2026, I will appoint a Cabinet Member for Enforcement to put safe streets and firm enforcement at the heart of the Council.

Westminster Conservatives will stand up to the Labour Mayor's decision to stand by as local policing is cut by 1,700 across London, in addition to dismantling the Royal Parks police and removing school officers. Local people demand a visible police presence where it matters most and streets that feel safe again.

Safe streets are a top priority in our **Plan for Westminster**. We will champion a tougher approach that strengthens enforcement, backs neighbourhood policing, and tackles antisocial behaviour early and consistently.

CLEANING UP OUR CITY

SEBRALAND should look and feel well run. Instead, residents are seeing slipping standards under Westminster Labour: dirty streets, bin bags left out for too long, missed rubbish collections and overflowing bins left for days.

These are not minor irritations. They are the everyday signs of a Council failing on the basics.

Residents have been clear about declining street standards and the state of overflowing bins, especially at weekends, in neighbourhoods like Lancaster Gate. Conservatives have already pushed for action on local hotspots, including cleaning up refuse problems around Waitrose. But residents should not have to fight for the basics in the first place.

Dockless bikes are a clear example of Labour complacency. They are dumped across the city, bays are inconsistent and often in the wrong places, and enforcement is too weak to hold operators to account. Conservatives will take a tougher line: operators will be fined and bikes left obstructing pavements will be removed quickly.

Too often Labour's response is to delay, deflect, or announce another review. Meanwhile, street disorder worsens, dockless bikes are dumped without care, and homelessness hits record levels, as tent encampments spreading across



Dockless e-Bikes - The Conservatives will take a tougher line.

public spaces and aggressive begging becoming more common. Ignoring the problem helps nobody. It fails residents, and it fails vulnerable people who need real support and lasting solutions.

Labour's approach in Westminster is defined by not listening. Consultations are launched, but residents do not see meaningful engagement or change. The same pattern shows up in transport decisions that affect daily life, including the Bayswater Road cycleway.



Homelessness has "hit record levels".

That is why we will review the cycleway proposal and the proposed bus lane on Bishop's Bridge Road. We will listen to residents in affected areas like Hallfield and take their concerns seriously.

Westminster Conservatives will put street standards back at the centre of how the Council is run, with decisions shaped by local priorities, not top-down tick box consultations.

I will make sure waste and street cleaning are delivered reliably, problems are fixed quickly, and accountability is clear so residents see improvement.

If elected in May, I will deliver a Conservative Council that takes a firm, practical approach to street disorder, with serious enforcement and proper support that helps people off the street for good. I will deliver cleaner public spaces and better-run streets.

I will also tackle problems at source, including illegal short term lets that fuel neighbourhood disturbance and antisocial behaviour. And I will listen to local concerns, not brush them aside with empty consultations and excuses.

VALUE FOR MONEY: PROTECTING YOUR POUND

A sensible approach to spending that prioritises value for money matters in SEBRALAND because residents are the ones who foot the bill when the Council gets it wrong. Westminster Conservatives will treat every pound of taxpayers' money with respect and run the Council with discipline, scrutiny and complete transparency.

Westminster Labour's record speaks for itself. Labour signed off the Geoffrey Osborne housing contract without proper due diligence, despite warning signs about the contractor's finances. The result was £27 million in costs pushed onto local taxpayers. Senior Labour Councillors then rewarded themselves with pay rises of up to 57 percent.

Now residents are being warned to brace for Council Tax increases projected at up to 75 percent over the next four years. Labour's one year "freeze" gimmick only stores up higher costs later, as reserves are raided and residents are left to pick up the tab. People should not be asked to pay more to cover Labour's mistakes.

Under a Conservative Council, value for money will come first. I will make sure there are no more blank cheques and no more excuses.

A Conservative-led Westminster Council will always protect local taxpayers' money with stronger due diligence before contracts are signed, tougher scrutiny of major decisions, and clear accountability when things go wrong.

SEBRALAND deserves better. As Leader of Westminster Conservatives, I am determined to deliver it. Please let me know your thoughts by visiting:

www.westm.news/Listening

A frozen Council Tax "...gimmick only stores higher costs later."





Around **Bayswater**

A wealth of great reading once again awaits in our main *Around Bayswater* section, with articles from our regular (and highly valued) contributors.

Our aim is always to offer a wide variety of topics, meaning that there really is something for everyone, but with the focus on Bayswater and the surrounding areas. In our previous

issue our feature exploring Queensway made the cover, and it was really well received, so this time we present Westbourne Grove in a similar manner. There's a lot going on there too.

None of this would happen without the support of our advertisers, and those who continue to write for us, so we simply say "thank you" and open with a tale of a sale...

BAYSWATER IN THE PROPERTY BIG LEAGUE

From the Editor

Here's an interesting little tale of big money and a (very) wealthy buyer to begin this main section of the magazine, and it starts with a story from *The Standard*.

On or around 6 February the newspaper reported that Elon Musk's xAI co-founder Igor Babuschkin had bought a property in London, a story which would not normally feature in **SEBRA NEWS W2**. However, this was not just any property, and not just any area of London. No, the property in question is a penthouse at Park Modern, the Fenton Whelan development which has featured in this magazine since it was nothing more than a very deep hole on Bayswater Road.

Following the early reports, the Bloomberg website ran an article which discredited the claimed identity of the buyer. In an emailed statement Babuschkin said he was not planning to purchase UK real estate "either directly or through any entity."

Run the clock forward a few weeks, and it does now appear that Musk's business

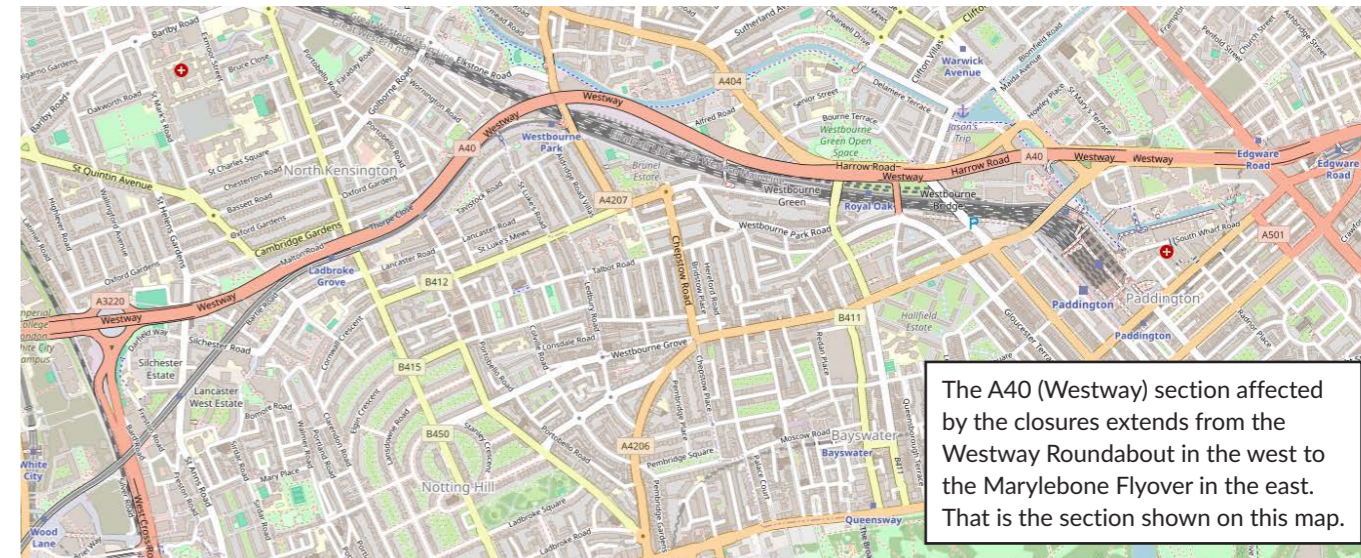


partner has indeed bought the property, with Bloomberg and The Standard updated articles.

So the new owner seems to be confirmed, but what is certain is that the sale price was around £57m, making this the highest price paid for a London property since 2024, which, as the headline says, puts Bayswater firmly in the big league of property sales. (Stamp duty alone would have been over £10m).

The spectacular view from the Park Modern penthouse.

Whether any members are going to bump into Mr Babuschkin on Queensway any time soon seems unlikely, but given the price paid, and the breathtaking views afforded from atop Park Modern, it seems likely that the new owner will spend at least some time looking over Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park to the distant skyscrapers.



The A40 (Westway) section affected by the closures extends from the Westway Roundabout in the west to the Marylebone Flyover in the east. That is the section shown on this map.

CLOSURE OF THE A40 (WESTWAY) 20 MARCH TO MID-APRIL 2026

Chairman's Note

We received the following letter from **Barry James, an Engagement Officer with TfL**, advising on major works that will affect many SEBRA members over the coming weeks.

In addition to the closure outlined above, please also refer to the final paragraph which details other closures taking place until July.

We need to close the A40 Westway between Westway roundabout and the Marylebone flyover from 22.00 on Friday 20 March until late-April 2026. This is to allow safety-critical renewal work on the flyover structure.

The A40 Westway – a huge road structure of national significance dating from 1969 - is a key strategic route and one of our most important freight corridors. It is one of London's busiest roads, forming part of one of the main routes into London from the west. Parts of the structure have reached the end of their service life, and we have been carrying out renewal works for a number of years to ensure that users have safe and reliable journeys for decades to come.

This next phase of work involves replacing two joints on the Marylebone Flyover A40 Westway, which allow the flyover to safely expand and contract with temperature changes and vehicle movements. This is complex and specialist work which requires a full

carriageway closure. The nature of the work and the structure means the carriageway can't be reopened until the work is completed.

Having carefully reviewed a range of options, we concluded that closing the Westway from 20 March is the best way of completing this essential work as quickly and safely as possible. Travel advice for road users is available on our dedicated webpage.

Ahead of these works starting in March, the A40 is now closed to eastbound traffic (towards central London) between the Westway roundabout and the Marylebone Flyover every weekend until full carriageway closure starts on 20 March.

The works have been planned to minimise disruption as far as possible. They have been timed so that part of the closure falls in the Easter period, when traffic flows are slightly lower, and have also been scheduled to avoid other major roadworks as far as possible.

Nevertheless, we recognise that this closure will have a significant impact on road users, and we are working hard to mitigate the potential impacts. We are developing an extensive communications campaign to generate awareness of the closure and alternative options for bus passengers, drivers and other road users.

We are also putting in place a comprehensive traffic signal strategy to try and keep traffic moving as smoothly as possible, and this will be continually reviewed as part of our ongoing management of the road network.

We will also work closely with bus operators to protect reliability on bus routes affected by the closure.

We will be working closely with the freight industry to ensure awareness of these works, and to encourage the re-routing of journeys wherever possible.

Keeping key strategic arteries like the A40 in good, reliable order allows through-traffic and the many larger vehicles that use them to avoid local roads. This keeps local roads safer and more attractive for local communities and those making bus journeys, walking or cycling.

Doing this work now reduces the risk of a future unplanned closure, which would be significantly more disruptive.

Further work on the A40 Westway will follow this phase of work. Until July, every weekend, apart from bank holiday weekends, the A40 will be closed to westbound traffic at the Westway roundabout.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE CLOSURES

To read more on the closure, and any updated information, please visit the dedicated page on the TfL website:

tinyurl.com/SEB-A40



Time flies by in the best job I've ever had.

By Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg
Lord Mayor of Westminster 2025-26



When I was invited to visit the North Paddington walking footballers, the organisers jokingly quipped that I should bring my boots - not thinking I would take them up on it. But as the Walking Lord Mayor and avid football fan, I am a mayor of my word. I relished the chance to get stuck in, and they even let me play part of their match, although I need more practice if I intend to keep it up in retirement!

Walking football in North Paddington, has been just one of many engagements since my last SEBRA NEWS W2 update. As ever, it has been a busy and rewarding few months.



Football fun with the North Paddington walking footballers.

I signed off last time with the tantalising prospect of all the festive activity in Westminster to come. I continued the tradition of travelling once more to Norway and felling the 78th Trafalgar Square Christmas Tree. The warm hospitality shown by my counterpart, the Mayor of Oslo, more than made up for the sub-zero temperatures in the Forest of Oslo. As readers will know, the Norwegians have sent a tree to London every year since 1947 as a token of thanks for British support to the exiled Norwegian monarch and Government during the Second World War. Nowadays, the tree represents far more than just history and stands for friendship and solidarity between cities and nations. This year's ceremony also looked to the future, with a social media poll helping to inform the final decision alongside expert advice. Weeks later, I was re-united with the 60-year-old Norwegian Spruce to switch on the energy-efficient lights alongside the Mayor of Oslo in front of thousands of well-wishers.

Previously I had said that no engagement stood out more than another, and I still believe that. The variety of community tree-lightings was the perfect tonic to the winter nights, showcasing the warmth of Westminster. However, December was sadly overshadowed by the horrific terrorist attack on Bondi Beach during

a Chanukah celebration. As I hosted my own Chanukah event in City Hall, I reminded everyone that even in darkness, the light of Chanukah continues to shine and shows us that goodness and unity will always triumph.



Hosting Rabbi Cohen in City Hall to light the Menorah.

Keeping the mind and body active has been a running theme throughout my time so far as Lord Mayor. Together with the Westminster Guides and Lecturers Association, we continued our walking tours of the city with walks in Mayfair and St James's, and Soho. Walking football proved an excellent mental and physical workout and it



Celebrating the unofficial start of Christmas in London with the Mayor of Oslo.



Enjoying the Mayfair and St James's walking tour.

did not take long to understand the intricacies that set it apart from the seven-a-side format. Shortly after my footballing exploits, I returned to the North Paddington Youth Club to try my hand at Walking Cricket- although this time I wisely left my gym kit at home. Both visits reminded me that keeping mentally stimulated is as equally important as the physical aspect. I saw the importance of community and socialisation once again with the visit of social media star DJ AG to Darwin House in Pimlico. His infectious energy meant residents couldn't help but come together, and I hope my rendition of 'Get Me to the Church on Time' went down well.

Since the last issue, I've been busy working with my two chosen charities: Hotel School and The Avenues Youth Project. My long association with the Avenues means I'm always so



Put through my paces for The Avenues Youth Project Podcast.

impressed with how they put the interests of young people first. Their talent was on show during a recent tour when I was interviewed by a group



Entertaining the crowd with DJ AG.

of budding podcasters. Any seasoned journalist will attest, you need to prepare for an interview, and this group had certainly done their research. Questions ranged from what a Lord Mayor does to how I got into politics and why it's important for young people to get involved. As it was half term, The Avenues was in full flow, so I got to see arts and crafts, cooking and even a tour of their recording studio. I've also been pleased to see the continued work by Hotel School. Every new cohort fills me with pride knowing the impact they are going to have in the hospitality sector but also what completing the course means to them. We were incredibly grateful to Fortnum and Mason, who held a networking breakfast giving Hotel School students a chance to showcase their work to businesses and others in the hospitality sector.

Other highlights include celebrating Lunar New Year, visiting Westminster's primary schools, or welcoming so many remarkable people to the parlour-including FM Conway worker loan Florin Zele whom I thanked for his bravery in saving an elderly woman from a house fire in December.



Awarding loan Florin Zele a shield for his bravery.

No matter the engagement, big or small, the privilege of this role is never lost on me, and the interactions with everyone I meet stick with me. Between now and May, when I pass the robes on to my successor, I will ensure I make the most of this very special position.

Tortello at Royal Lancaster
London on Lancaster Terrace.



tortello

Big-hearted home-cooking with Italian flair

by Chris Guinness

You last joined me for dinner at CE LA VI, the rooftop restaurant with attitude, style and breath-taking views over Paddington. Today I'm taking you to Tortello, the new partner restaurant at Royal Lancaster London on Lancaster Terrace, where you'll find big-hearted Italian flair and picture-perfect views over the Italian Fountains in Kensington Gardens.

Seasonal and regional

"We curated our menu to reflect the seasons and regions of Italy," says Head Chef Will Moggio, "so the plates are designed to reflect the current time of year and Italy's hugely varied regional cuisines. At the moment, with spring in the air, our emphasis is on rich greens and light, fresh salads. But we change the menu every quarter. In the summer, we'll bring in new recipes, nodding to the colour palette of the season, with dashes of yellows, oranges and reds. Then in autumn and winter, our menu will become warm, cosy and comforting."

Keen to explore Tortello's seasonal delicacies, we begin with the bruschetta of the day. They offer a different version daily, and today's special is a spread of dreamily light cream cheese, dotted with intense dark olives, generously garnished with a thick filigree of oil-drizzled fan lettuce. The croquettes combine Piemonte black truffles and ricotta: deep-fried balls whose delicate crunch gives way to a luxurious, aromatic filling.



Black truffle and ricotta croquettes



Tortellini filled with Delica pumpkin.

My fellow diners, Chairman John Zamit and his partner Margaret Newman, and I round off our starters with succulent tortelli, which give the restaurant its singular name. Think thick ravioli. These are generously filled with a subtle purée of Delica pumpkin, a vegetable that originated in Japan but is cultivated to tasty perfection in the Veneto region of Italy. The tortelli are glazed with a sage brown-butter emulsion that has a nutty aroma, and garnished with a deep-fried sage leaf that melts on the tongue.

Mama feeds you up

Manager Sandor Tatar, originally from Hungary, arrived at Tortello after fifteen years at Sartoria, the high-end Savile Row Italian. But he says the philosophy at Tortello is of a completely different

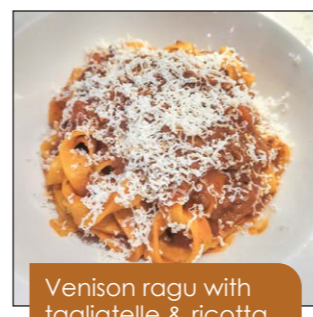
A master of his craft,
Head Chef Will Moggio.



order. "Imagine you come home and your Italian mama looks at you and says her bambini need feeding up with some good home-cooking. That's how we approach food."

Homespun as that may sound, Tortello has real style, finesse and thoughtfulness. Sandor divulges one delicious fact that exemplifies this approach perfectly, explaining what gives Tortello's home-made pasta its unique consistency and colour. "We have our own chickens, which we feed with a unique corn-based diet, full of deep leafy greens. This gives their yolks a richness and a deep orange colour." And on the subject of ingredients, Sandor tells me that Tortello includes halal dishes on the menu — recipes that might traditionally contain wine, but from which alcohol is withheld.

We move to the mains: two pasta dishes and fish. Before they arrive, I go to the kitchen, a hive of culinary energy that opens onto the dining area. The sense of precision and teamwork is immediately apparent. Sous Chef Aldo Venturi explains the system. "Elements of each dish have been meticulously prepared before the restaurant opens and, as the head chef calls out the order for each table, the cooking time of the pasta is factored in, so that it arrives at the table piping hot and perfectly al dente." And if pasta is the defining test of Italian cuisine, Tortello passes with flying colours.



Venison ragu with tagliatelle & ricotta.



Dorset mussels with prawns & clams.



Fillet of sea bass with sautéed spinach.

Our slow-cooked — and utterly heart-warming — venison ragù is served with tagliatelle, the sauce enriched by one key ingredient: cacio ricotta. Produced by combining the methods used to make ricotta and hard cheese, it takes sauces to exceptional

levels of creaminess. This was no exception.

The Dorset mussels, prawns and clams are served in a white-wine sauce on a bed of calamata pasta, so called because it resembles calamari. Our mains are completed by a fillet of sea bass — cooked to perfection (I hate it when good-quality fish is overcooked) — with Scottish clams, sautéed spinach and a potato and celeriac mash.

A star dish not to be overlooked is the very generous beetroot salad: orange and purple beetroot with whipped goat's cheese and balsamic-caramelised onions, garnished with crispy, deep-fried, wafer-thin beetroot slices.



"Selfie heaven", Chris, John and Margaret pose with a vintage Fiat 500.

Selfie heaven

Before puds, Sandor invites us to view the vintage Fiat 500, once owned by one of the managers and now parked, somewhat surreally, down the steps at the back of the restaurant — pure selfie heaven. The canvas roof folds back, you clamber in, and suddenly you are in your favourite Fellini film — an experience not to be missed.

A quick word about the prices. Tortello is excellent value: high-end Italian cuisine, lovingly rendered at affordable prices. Plus, you'll receive the warmest of welcomes — something no money can buy. Starters range from £10 to £15, the pastas from £16 to £24, and the fish and meat dishes sit mainly in the mid-twenties.

The wines are interesting, varied and reasonably priced. The house red, a Nero d'Avola Pianogrillo, is light and highly drinkable, and the Monsanto Chianti Classico is class in a glass. On the white side, the Piccolo Gavi di Gavi was light, flowery and great value at £13 a glass.

Our Italian culinary treat was rounded off with two classics: affogato (literally meaning "drowned") — hot espresso poured over vanilla ice cream — and a fabulous twist on tiramisu, the traditional dish enhanced with semi-crushed hazelnuts and Maldon sea salt.

Margaret poetically summed up the evening by declaring that she had eaten to "elegant sufficiency" and that any more would be "superfluity". The editor is offering a bottle of fine Italian wine to any reader who can identify the eighteenth-century poem from which these ideas originate and who sends it in with a brief anecdote about over-eating.



Hazelnut tiramisu with salted caramel.



To find out more or to book a table visit www.tortello.com

Architecture of Interest

THE WATER GARDENS ON EDGWARE ROAD

The fourth instalment of this series* features **The Water Gardens on Edgware Road**, another wonderful “brutalist” design from the 1960s - My thanks go to SEBRA member Andy Beverley and to Laura Whyte, Principal Asset Manager at The Church Commissioners for England.

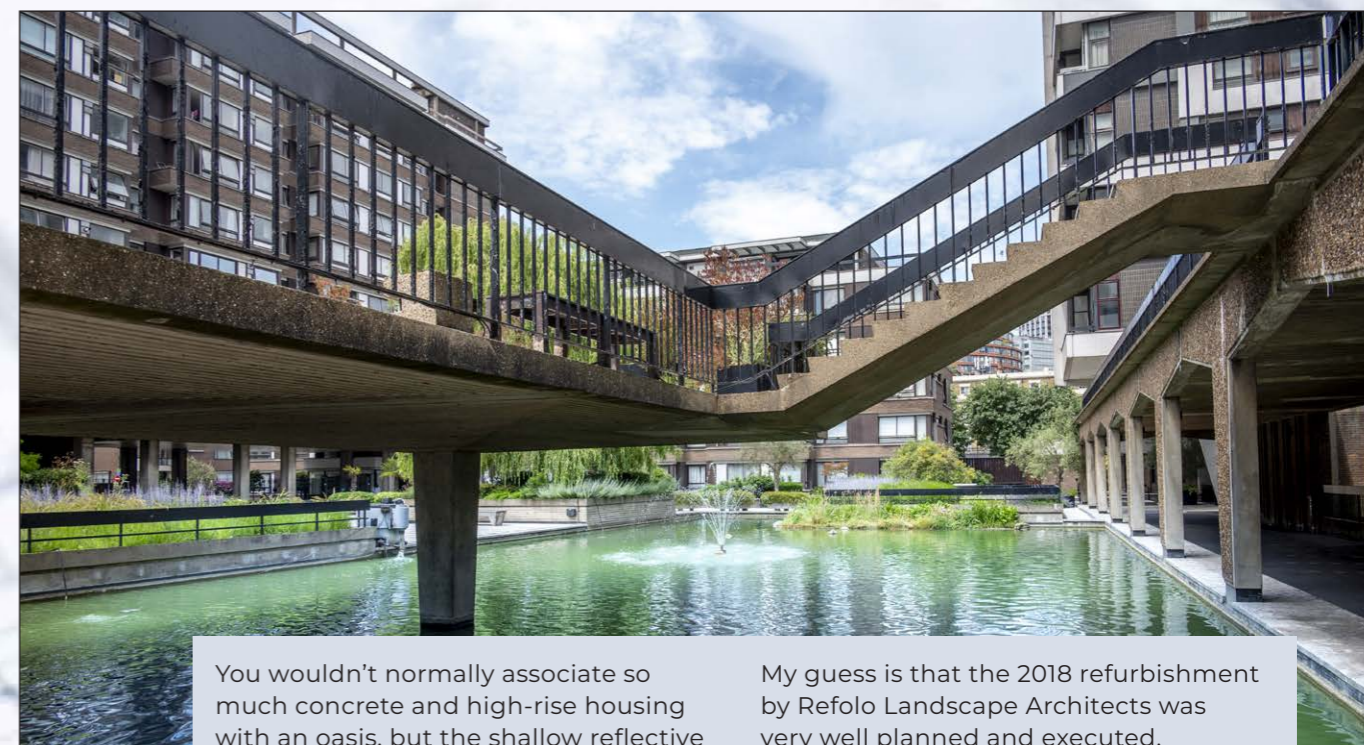
*Previous articles in the series covered **The Rotunda & Battleship Building** (Summer 2022), **Television Centre** (Spring 2023) and **The Serpentine Restaurant** (Spring 2022).

If, from my limited knowledge of SEBRALAND, I had to nominate a “hidden gem”, the Water Gardens on Edgware Road would be my choice. Not generally being open to the public takes care of the “hidden” bit and my fondness for brutalism is where “gem” comes in.

Located at Burwood Place, near the junction of Edgware Road and Sussex Gardens, this 1960s creation exemplifies post-war modernist design, with the combination of strong geometry and natural landscaping making for quite a visual feast. It really is lovely.

As the Water Gardens are primarily accessible to residents, I have included a good selection of photographs which I hope really do paint a picture for those who have never visited.

Whilst researching this article I came across the phrase “Elevated urban oasis”, and I think that’s a great use of language, and certainly a phrase which resonates having been lucky enough to visit.



You wouldn’t normally associate so much concrete and high-rise housing with an oasis, but the shallow reflective ponds (complete with some fairly large fish and a resident heron) and some lush planting and low walls, create a real feeling of space, make for somewhere that oozes tranquility. Quite remarkable when you remember that you’re standing just a few short yards from the hustle and bustle of Edgware Road.

My guess is that the 2018 refurbishment by Refolo Landscape Architects was very well planned and executed, bringing modern materials and subtle improvements, without compromising the vision from 60 years previous.

Indeed, as I wandered round with my camera I discovered a Zen garden, cleverly crafted seating, and changing views which were crying out to be photographed. (In fairness, the weather was gorgeous and there was nobody else around, so I did perhaps experience the Water Gardens at their best).

And so to finish, with a simple comment that if you’re reading this then chances are you live nearby, so keep an eye out on the National Garden Scheme website ([ngs.org.uk](https://www.ngs.org.uk)) as that’s where you’ll find out about open days in 2026. If you’ve never visited, I suggest you do so, but keep an eye out for that heron if you take a packed lunch!



The photos here pretty much speak for themselves. Highlights for me were being able to walk out over the water, and the Zen garden (opposite) that made great use of a rooftop space.



About the Architects

The Water Gardens were originally designed by **Philip Hicks**, a partner at Elsworth Sykes and Partners. The gardens were his most notable work, and as you’ll have read, of a classic brutalist style, so popular in the 1960s. In 2018 **Refolo Landscape Architects** refurbished the gardens, adding such features as modern paving and water jets, whilst preserving the original concept.

FURTHER READING

Hardscape: tinyurl.com/SEB-WG1
New London Architecture: tinyurl.com/SEB-WG2

ADDITIONAL TRAINS AND A TALE OF A MONUMENT

The "Ian Visits" website features a wealth of great stories from across the capital, and is a particular favourite of the Chairman. SEBRA has once again donated to support the website and in this fourth miscellany from Ian's website we feature two more articles which we think readers will appreciate.

You might like to bookmark www.ianvisits.co.uk

COMMUTER BOOST - MORE ELIZABETH LINE TRAINS



Southall is one of the three Elizabeth line stations which will see more trains at peak hours.

Three west London stations will get more Elizabeth line trains calling at them in the morning peak hours from later this spring.

Transport for London (TfL) is making the changes by arranging for trains leaving Heathrow Terminal 5 in the morning to call at more stations on their way to central London. Under the changes, which come into effect from Monday 18 May 2026 for services between 8am and 9am:

- Southall currently has 8 trains stopping there, which will rise to 10 – roughly one every 6 minutes.
- Hanwell currently has 4 trains stopping there, which will rise to 6 – roughly one every 10 minutes.
- Acton Main Line currently has 6 trains stopping there, which will rise to 8 – roughly one every 7 minutes.



The update will provide additional capacity for Elizabeth line customers travelling from west London during the busiest times on weekday mornings, which locals have long called for.

A recent petition to increase the number of trains calling at Acton Main Line station now has nearly 5,000 signatures.

Although most stations along the west of London route now see more trains calling at them each hour since the Elizabeth line took over from GWR, passenger numbers have surged by far more, leading to heavy crowding on trains in the mornings.

Trish Ashton, TfL's Director of Rail, said: "The Elizabeth line is the UK's single busiest railway service, carrying an average of 800,000 customers a day during the week. These timetable updates at west London stations will provide additional capacity during the peak hours of the morning, helping customers travel more comfortably on the line during this busier time."

The latest change follows the introduction last December of additional services from Gidea Park and Abbey Wood to Paddington on Saturdays to help with leisure travel.

There are also ten more Elizabeth line trains [link 1] on order to increase capacity and cope with demand when Old Oak Common station opens [link 2]. Those trains will arrive later this year and will initially replace existing trains sent for maintenance. The timetable change due in December 2027 may see them start adding capacity to the line.



WEB LINKS

- [1] tinyurl.com/IV-more-trains
- [2] tinyurl.com/IV-Old-Oak
- tfl.gov.uk/modes/elizabeth-line

WELLINGTON ARCH AT 200: THE MONUMENT THAT LOST A STATUE AND GAINED A TUNNEL

1 4 January 2026 marked the 200th anniversary of Wellington Arch being approved to be built at Hyde Park Corner. Although today it's in a different location, it has a different statue on top and is technically still unfinished.

Originally called the *Grand Triumphal Arch*, it was built in part to commemorate Britain's victories in the Napoleonic Wars and as part of King George IV's remodelling of Hyde Park and Buckingham Palace.

Announced in 1825, it would take a year of wrangling to settle on a design for the arch. The chosen architect, Decimus Burton, initially planned a triumphal arch modelled on the Arch of Titus in Rome, but the government committee overseeing the project rejected it as too modest to celebrate the defeat of Napoleon. [Ed: See p118 of our Summer 2021 issue for more on Decimus Burton]

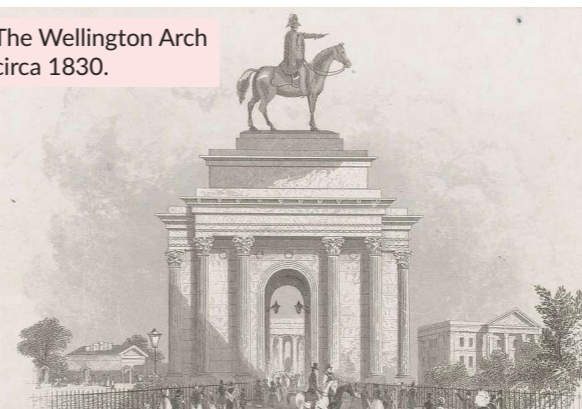
Burton created a new design, "to pander to the majestic ego" which was much larger and modelled on a fragment found in the Roman Forum. Construction got underway, and by July 1826, the foundations were in place.

However, partway through construction, the design changed. The spendthrift King George IV had massively overspent on Buckingham Palace. So the government imposed a clampdown on spending, and the triumphal arch was cut back as well, with some of the decoration left off and plans for a sculpture cancelled.

In September 1828, the scaffolding came down, revealing the arch to the public for the first time. It opened to the public later that month.

It might be an arch to celebrate a military victory, but governments also like to be practical, so the arch served a function – famously it was used as a police station.

The Wellington Arch circa 1830.



The Wellington Arch now sits slightly south-east of its original location.

The arch would probably have had a fairly uneventful existence if the spending plans hadn't seen the rooftop sculpture cancelled, because it allowed someone to come along later and attempt to finish it.

And in the 1840s, a fundraising campaign paid for a bronze statue of the Duke of Wellington riding his horse to be commissioned, with the promise that it would be erected atop the arch.

What's peculiar is that despite the sculpture being derided as of very poor quality, and almost everyone objecting to the plans to put it on top of the arch... that's exactly what the government did in 1846. (The reason being that Queen Victoria had given permission).

Although erected as a trial, the government lacked either the will or the funds (or both) to remove it after pretty much everyone said "yeugh" when the covers were removed.

Indeed, the following year, there were complaints that the scaffolding used to erect it was still there. In fact, in May, new soldiers were reportedly about to volunteer to clear away the mess, so they could say they once served under the Duke of Wellington.

It could well still have the ungainly horse and rider on top if not for an unlikely saviour – road traffic.

With increasing congestion around Hyde Park Corner in the 1880s, the

government decided to rearrange the road layout. Doing so meant dismantling the arch and moving it to a new location. If you're taking a much despised statue down, it's not too difficult to agree not to put it back up again.

The great-nephew of the arch's original architect even published a pamphlet calling for the arch to be "relieved once and for all of its unsightly load".

And so it was.

In fact, the sculpture that replaced it in 1912 – the quadriga representing Nike, the winged goddess of victory – is very similar to the one originally planned back in 1826, if only King George IV hadn't spent the money on his palace.

The arch underwent another change when, in the 1960s, a road was dug beneath Hyde Park Corner, and half the arch was turned into a ventilation shaft for the road tunnel.

However, after years of neglect, by 1998 the arch was on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk register. Fortunately, £1.5 million in funding allowed it to be renovated by 2000, and for the first time in its history, it opened to the public in March 2001.

So while 14 January marked the 200th anniversary of the arch's approval for construction, this year is also the 25th anniversary of its opening to the public.

These days, the arch is open Wed to Sun from 10am to 4pm, with a permanent exhibition about its history inside, and you can go out onto a rooftop walkway and see the view from (almost) the top of the arch.

POLYVERSITY

tales of education reformers

Once again we travel slightly outside of SEBRALAND for this latest in our Blue Plaques series, to read about the lives of two people who delivered major reforms to the education system in the 1800s.

Our thanks, as ever, go to Professor Lewis Lesley for his efforts in writing and supplying this article.

This time our two notable Blue Plaque holders were important reformers of education in the 19th century. At a time when most children did not go to school but went straight into work at the age of 10 or younger, two people set out to expand schooling.

The first we consider is Emily Davies in making schooling available for girls, setting up the first University (Girton) College [Ed: header above] dedicated to women, and then trying to win women the right to vote. The second is Quintin Hogg, who widened the opportunity for adults to have access to Higher Education, including setting up Regent Street Polytechnic in London, as well as founding a "Quintin Hogg" political dynasty. These two reformers made a lasting impact on Britain.



Emily Davies, 1830 - 1921.

Emily Davies
Education Reformer and
Women's Rights Campaigner
17 Cunningham Place, NW8

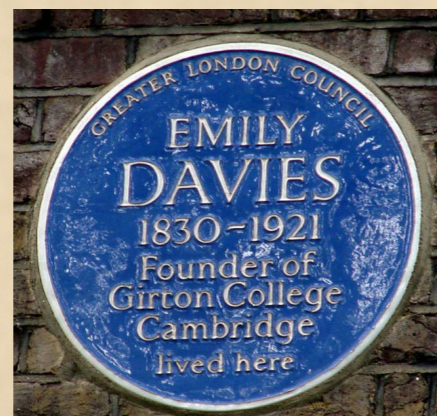
To many looking from a 2026 perspective, Emily Davies had a comfortable middle-class childhood. Born in Southampton, her family moved to Chichester where her father got

a living as a vicar. He was no doubt a role model for her, since he was born in Wales as a poor farmer but gained a B.D. from Queens' College in Cambridge. Through the patronage of the former Bishop of Chichester, in 1840 he was awarded a better living in the Parish of Gateshead. The move nearly 300 miles north would have been a wrench, especially to the different culture of 'Geordieland'.

In Victorian society, girls did not enjoy the privileges of their brothers, although she did teach herself some Latin. Her brothers enjoyed a private tutor before the two oldest, John and William, went off to Repton School in the Midlands. The expectations were that she and her sister Jane would attend to household duties and stay at home until married, echoes of the Jane Austen novels? Emily later described this as "Do they go to school... No. They have lessons and get on as they can." That could be taken as the motto of her life?

A devastating fire in 1854 swept through Newcastle and parts of Gateshead, killing 53 people, when she was 24. This no doubt made a big impact on her in seeing the consequences for the many poor people whose lives were tragically disrupted.

Her father, however, died in 1862 when, at the age of 44, she was a spinster. With her mother, this resulted in another turning point in their lives. They moved southwards to London, where her brother John lived. They occupied 17 Cunningham Place, where she lived for much of the rest of her life. London society, opened through her brother, was much wider than Gateshead. She enhanced her circle of female friends.



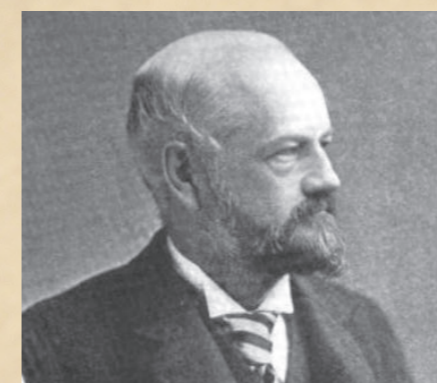
Plaque at 17 Cunningham Place commemorating Emily Davies.

This triggered and advanced her interest in better education for girls. With others, including Anne Crowe (Austin), Louisa and Elizabeth Garrett (Anderson), she joined in a feminist culture. She set up in Langham Place a branch of 'The Society for Promoting the Employment of Women'. She was also supported in a campaign for women to be admitted to London University. It took until 1878 for that to be achieved!

In parallel, she also campaigned to allow girls to take entrance exams to University. Oxford pioneered this in 1857, followed by Cambridge in 1858. This led to a friendship with Henry Tomkinson. He would help her and other women in eventually setting up Girton College. A Royal Commission on the state of schooling for middle-class children was set up in 1864. She and other women successfully lobbied for the remit to include girls. She went on to be the first woman to give expert witness evidence on the state of and need for better education for girls. The Commission reported in 1868, which led, among other changes, to the establishment of 'Endowed' schools, which enabled more girls to be schooled like their brothers.

Not content with this, she joined "The Kensington Society", where women who campaigned for social change met and discussed the steps needed. The women members started a petition for female suffrage. It attracted almost 1,500 signatures and was presented to Parliament in 1866. There John Stuart Mill, MP, tried unsuccessfully to have votes for women enacted. This setback fired her to concentrate on setting up "The College for Women", staying in the background of the suffrage movement until the 1890s.

There is little doubt that opening Girton College in Cambridge in 1869 was one, if not the main, achievement of her life. This was first achieved in Hitchin and renamed "Girton" when it moved to Cambridge in 1872. It was the first UK University College dedicated solely to women. George Eliot wrote to her as 'The Great Scheme'. She enjoyed a long relationship with Girton College until she died in 1921, aged 91. As a postscript, Girton College was not named after one of the founders but the locale in Cambridge where it was built.



Quintin Hogg, 1845 - 1903.

Quintin Hogg
Philanthropist and
Education Reformer
5 Cavendish Square, W1

Quintin Hogg might not have been born with a 'silver spoon' in his mouth, but his family were certainly part of the small British elite. His father, the first Baronet Sir James Hogg, sent Quintin to Eton, where naturally he gained the nickname "Piggy Hogg". He was, however, a keen sportsman, and won caps in many of the important Eton sports teams. Competition was not constrained to field events, since he was an excellent rifleman.

On leaving Eton, he set up in the Tea and Sugar trade as a merchant. This involved helping his brother-in-law, Charles McGarel, improve production techniques on his Demerara plantation. While out in the West Indies, he played first-class cricket for the colony's team. Tea and sugar trading made him a fortune. With this and his Christian faith, he turned to philanthropy. In the mid-19th century there was widespread poverty in London, and elsewhere. He put his energies into educational reform and set up in 1864 the "Ragged School" in York Place, renting rooms with associates Arthur Kinnaid (11th Baron) and Thomas Pelham off the Strand. At first it was a boys' day school. Later evening classes were organised. In 1882 the Young Men's Christian Institute was founded. This later transformed into the Regent Street Polytechnic, taking over the older Royal Polytechnic Institute set up in 1839.

This foundation became the Polytechnic of Central London and was transformed into the University of Westminster in 1992. The early beginnings have not been forgotten, as it is still a major, and the single largest, institution offering adult education in London.

In between his 'good works', Quintin married Anna Graham in 1871, and they had five children, who all had illustrious careers. The oldest, also Quintin, born in 1872, became 1st Viscount Hailsham, father of the next Quintin, born 1907, who, as well as a prominent Conservative, was ennobled Baron Hailsham of St. Marylebone. Daughter Elsie, born 1873, married Vincent Hoare. Ian (1875) became a Lieutenant Colonel but died in the second month of the 'Great War' of his wounds in September 1914. Ethel (1876) married Herbert Wood and became an author, writing a book on her father's life. Malcolm (1883) survived until 1948.

Sadly, Quintin's life came to a sudden and tragic end in 1903, aged only 58. He was staying in the Polytechnic and enjoying a bath but died there. The inquest concluded that a poorly installed gas heater caused him to asphyxiate. His ashes were interred in



Plaque at 5 Cavendish Square commemorating Quintin Hogg.

the East Finchley Cemetery following the funeral service at All Souls, Langham Place, appropriately right outside the Polytechnic building. His tea and sugar merchandising made him a wealthy man, with an estate worth nearly £60 million at 2026 prices.

What of his legacy? As well as creating an important political dynasty, his Polytechnic grew into an important university. A bronze plaque can be found on the original building in Regent Street, noting him as an 'Educator and Benefactor'. The Polytechnic Day Boys' School was founded in 1886. It was named after him and granted 'Grammar' status in 1948. From cramped premises in Regent Street it moved to a modern school building, opened in 1956 in St. John's Wood. Next door was a secondary modern school, 'Kynaston', named after one of Quintin's friends, "Kynaston Rudd". The two schools merged in 1969, and were rebuilt and transformed into a Harris Academy in 2017.

With so much political debate about the role of and need for education, much now appears to concentrate on the acquisition of information, exploited by numerous TV and pub quizzes. The two reformers considered here from the 19th century realised that education requires not just information. Understanding is more important. Without that, the context of information is almost irrelevant. Perhaps this explains why there are so many misunderstandings? With more understanding, could the world be a wealthier and more peaceful place?



News from Paddington Library & Paddington Children's Library

We would like to update you with what's been going on here at Paddington Library - to look back on our recent events and promote what's coming up! By Eman Asir and Rae Cullen

REFURBISHMENT UPDATE

As many of you are aware, Paddington Library has been closed since January for a refurbishment. The walls are getting a new lick of paint, new flooring is being installed and new furniture brought in.

We hope to welcome everyone back to a wonderful bright library with a more dynamic space for the community, and an expansive wall display area this Spring.

Sara Hassan, Cabinet Member for Climate, Ecology, Culture and Air Quality said:

"The restoration work at Paddington Library is such a great example of our wider commitment to continual improvement in our libraries across the borough. We're investing close to £1m into Paddington as a historic community space as part of the Fairer Westminster agenda to ensure that all of our residents have a space to go to read, learn, get advice or simply relax."

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Westminster Libraries is celebrating Women's History Month this March. The theme is Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future.

This is to highlight all the ways that women drive change while creating a sustainable and inclusive future that benefits all. Paddington Library would like to recognise all the hardworking women across the borough who deliver an invaluable service all year round, as well as let our audience know about the Westminster Libraries 'Under the Covers' podcast, where guest speakers have shared their reads, life experiences, and advocacies.

Listen to learn the fascinating journey of women authors, speakers and colleagues. Available on Spotify, Apple podcasts & Pocket Casts.

A LOOK BACK ON PAST EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN PADDINGTON CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

Fun Palaces is an annual, national campaign which encourages people to work together to turn libraries and community spaces into hubs of creativity and activity. As part of this ongoing series, Paddington Children's library held numerous activities to celebrate:

On Saturday 7 February Urbanwise delivered a wonderful flower pressing workshop where children created cards and bookmarks using flowers and natural materials. It was a lovely afternoon of arts and crafts, with 10 children and their parents. One parent's feedback was, "The experience was wonderful. The person leading the

activity was very friendly, patient and approachable which made both children and adults feel comfortable and fully enjoy themselves. My son had a great time, and it was clear how activities like these foster strong family bonding as well as connections among the children."

Ojo de Dios was held Tuesday 17 February, with Urbanwise London coming back to deliver a cultural, fun, mindful and creative workshop. A beautiful and meaningful craft activity with roots in indigenous Mexican and Native American cultures, often symbolising protection, spiritual vision, and a connection to nature!



On Friday 20 February Cheri Coco Ltd delivered an Afrobeat dance workshop where kids and guardians boogied down together! Cheri Coco's dance sessions bring French Afrobeats, Ndombolo, and Soca to life through energising movement and pure fun.

OUR OTHER CHILDREN'S EVENTS:

On Wednesday 14 January, students from the Marylebone School for Girls delivered an amazing robotics workshop for a year 5 class.

It was delivered with such enthusiasm, and the children were fully engaged in creating their own robots and presenting them to their class. We hope to run another session in the coming months.

On Saturday 14 February, as part of Children's Mental Health Week, we ran the Kind Hearts Club where children created their own designs of hearts using glitter and other crafts, some of



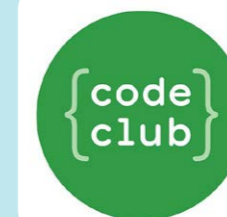
which became gifts and others were displayed at the library.

In celebration of LGBTQ+ history Month, Paddington Children's library hosted a Rainbow colouring session on Wednesday 18 February, where children created beautiful rainbows, a cheerful rainbow train, and other colourful designs.

CHILDREN'S CODING CLUB VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

We are currently recruiting for volunteers to run our coding club for children.

Please submit a volunteer expression of interest form online and mention the coding club in your application.



SERVICE OFFER: NATIONAL YEAR OF READING

Paddington Library is participating to support the community in reading for pleasure, and reconnecting with reading as a meaningful, modern, and social activity.

The theme this year is "Go All In", where we will reimagine reading as a catalyst for topics of interest. So "If you're into it, read into it". This means focusing on appeal, not duty and highlighting the

immediate rewards of reading, not just the well-known long-term benefits.

In conjunction with the National Year of Reading, Paddington Children's library is searching for a dedicated and experienced volunteer to teach a phonics class to children. Submit your volunteer form online and mention the phonics [3.1][3.2] class in your application.

THE NATURAL WAY: NORTH PADDINGTON NATURE PILGRIMAGE

We are pleased to announce that the North Paddington Nature Pilgrimage is now up and running!

The Natural Way is inspired by the Camino trails around Europe and centre a 13-stop walking route around the North Paddington area featuring four of our libraries. Each stop features a customised stamp created by the Grand Junction Junior Climate Champions to collect. Maps/passports are available to collect from Paddington Library, Paddington Children's Library, Maida Vale Library & Queens Park Library.

We have also collaborated with walking app GoJauntly, so download the app and start your journey through local nature!

In conjunction with the refurbishment at Paddington, there will be an Environmental Hub. This will be a dedicated display of our Environment, Garden & Nature books, with a revolving book of the week centring the themes of the Natural Way.

We are currently looking for volunteers to run a club related to environmental events, i.e. a gardening club, plant doctor, plant swaps etc. Please sign up to volunteer online and mention us in your application.

REGULAR EVENTS AT PADDINGTON (once reopened)

Free IT advice

Tuesdays 2-6pm; Fridays 10-2pm (excluding half-term) & Saturdays Fortnightly 10-2pm.

Shared Reading Group

Thursdays 6pm to 7.45pm (contact Moya: moya@urbanwise.london).

Bayswater Councillors Surgery Drop-in

First and Third Saturday every month, 2pm to 3pm.

English Conversation Class

Saturday, 11am to 12.30pm. Free, drop-in -Book on Eventbrite.

Chess Club

Every Sunday, midday to 3pm, all ages.

Clothing Repairs and Restorations/ Sewing Club

Thursdays & Saturdays 2-4pm
To attend you will need to sign up with our booking sheet. Please ask a member of staff to learn more.

CHILDREN'S LIBRARY EVENTS:

New Arabic Language Class

Tuesdays 4-5pm. This class is for children aged 6-8 years old.

Our wonderful volunteer has been teaching at the Children's library since the 13 January to great success! Join to start your child's journey learning a new language.

Lego Club

Friday, 4pm - 5pm

Board Games

Saturday, 2pm - 4pm

Rhyme Time

Wednesday, 11am - 11:30am

Storytime & Colour

Thursday 4pm - 4:30pm

Rhyme & Move

Wednesday, 11am - 11:30am





News from Hallfield School

For Spring 2026 we present news of an innovative partnership between Hallfield School other local educational establishments, plus family hubs and children's centres in the regions of Westminster and North Kensington. We remain grateful to Aaron Sumner and the team at Hallfield for providing yet another truly interesting article.

CONNECTED FUTURES PARTNERSHIP: A SHARED VISION FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY AT HALLFIELD

By Aaron Sumner
Co-Executive Headteacher
Connected Futures Partnership

Over the past year, Hallfield and our partner school Essendine Primary School in Maida Vale, have been engaged in an important and thoughtful conversation about our futures in the face of an ever-changing education landscape.

It has been a conversation shaped by experience, ambition and a shared belief that education works best when it is rooted in strong relationships and a clear moral purpose. I am therefore proud to share that, from January 2026, North Westminster Federation (Hallfield and Essendine) and London Community Education Federation and Oxford Gardens Primary School (nine institutions in total) have come together to form a single federation: the Connected Futures Partnership.

This decision follows a wide-ranging consultation with parents, carers, staff, governors and community partners. The response was overwhelmingly positive, reflecting confidence not only in the structure of federation working, but in the values and principles that underpin it.



Oxford Gardens & Essendine School, just two of the nine institutions, which, along with Hallfield, will form the Connected Futures Partnership.

At its core, a federation is a formal partnership where schools and settings remain legally separate, each with their own identity, budget and admissions arrangements, but are governed and strategically led together. It is not a merger, not an academy conversion and not a loss of local character. Instead, it is a commitment to collective responsibility: a belief that by working together, schools can be stronger, more resilient and better placed to serve their communities.



The Connected Futures Partnership will bring together primary schools, maintained nursery schools, family hubs and children's centres across Westminster and North Kensington. When fully established, it will be the largest federation of its kind in central London. But this is not about scale for its own sake. It is about purpose. It is about creating the capacity to live out a shared vision: that every child, regardless of background or starting point, is entitled to a high-quality education, strong relationships and the support they need to thrive.



The Connected Futures Partnership will give all pupils the support they need to thrive.

Our mission as a partnership is clear. We exist to work with children, families and communities to build strong foundations for life, not simply to prepare children for the next stage of schooling. We believe that learning is relational, that wellbeing and achievement are inseparable, and that education should empower children to see themselves as capable, valued and able to shape their own futures.

This belief is reflected in our guiding principles. Across the partnership, we are committed to inclusion, equity and ambition. We believe that diversity is a strength, that difference should be celebrated, and that systems should adapt to meet children's needs – not the other way around. We are unapologetically ambitious for every child, holding high expectations while providing the care, support and scaffolding needed for success.

One of the greatest strengths of federation working is the opportunity to share expertise. Across our schools and settings, there is deep experience in early years education, SEND, inclusion, safeguarding, curriculum design and community engagement. By working together more formally, we can ensure this expertise is shared more consistently, reducing duplication and strengthening practice across all settings. This benefits staff, through richer professional development and clearer career pathways, and children, through high-quality teaching and enriched learning experiences.

Federation also provides resilience. At a time of national challenge for education – including falling pupil numbers and increasing financial pressure – working together allows for more strategic planning and more efficient use of resources. This is not about cutting corners; it is about protecting what matters most.

Savings achieved through collaboration can be reinvested directly into teaching, learning and family support, ensuring long-term sustainability for our schools. What truly distinguishes the Connected Futures Partnership, however, is the central role of our family hubs and children's centres. We know that education does not happen in isolation from family life. Factors such as housing insecurity, health needs, mental wellbeing, language barriers and access to early support all shape children's experiences of school. Our vision recognises this reality and responds to it.

By bringing schools, nurseries and family hubs together within a single partnership, we are able to take a genuinely holistic approach. From conception through to adulthood, families can access support that is coordinated, relational and rooted in their community. Early help, parenting support, health and wellbeing services and education are no longer separate strands, but part of a connected system designed around children and families.

This approach reflects one of our core principles: that strong communities are built when institutions work with families, not around them. Our family hubs are welcoming, inclusive spaces where relationships are built over time, trust is established and support is responsive rather than reactive. Embedding this model within a federation strengthens pathways of support and ensures that no child or family is left navigating complexity alone.

Importantly, becoming a federation does not mean losing identity. Each school within the Connected Futures Partnership will retain its name, uniform, ethos and close relationship with its local community. Admissions arrangements remain unchanged, and schools will continue to be inspected individually. Day-to-day leadership remains with each school's Head of School, supported by the wider federation leadership team. What changes is not who we are, but how closely we all work together and how consistently our shared values are lived out.

The name Connected Futures Partnership was chosen through an open and inclusive process and reflects our collective intent. "Connected" speaks to relationships, collaboration and belonging. "Futures" reflects our belief that education is about more than academic outcomes; it is about developing confident, compassionate and capable citizens. And "Partnership" captures our commitment to shared responsibility between schools, families and communities.



Family hubs and children's centres will play a central role in the scheme.

As we move forward, our focus will be on careful and thoughtful implementation. We will continue to listen, reflect and adapt, ensuring that our decisions remain aligned with our vision and principles. This is a rare opportunity to create something genuinely new in central London: a federation that is values-led, community-rooted and unapologetically focused on children and families.

I am really excited about what lies ahead, and proud to be part of a partnership that believes so strongly in the power of connection, collaboration and shared purpose.



Health & Wellbeing



Max Webster-Green is a musculoskeletal physiotherapist, based in the Physio Motion clinic in Green Park, with experience in a variety of conditions and an interest in the shoulder. In his first article for SEBRA NEWS W2 he gives insights on shoulder pain, common misconceptions, and strategies to reduce pain and improve movement.

SHOULDER PAIN AND HOW TO IMPROVE IT

Shoulder pain can make a previously trivial activity, such as dressing, unbearable. It can prevent you from picking up your child or strip you of your ability to work. Consequently, you can become fearful of movement, further limiting the activities that comprise your life. Recent evidence suggests that we may have misunderstood the cause and management of shoulder pain, but I hope to demystify the topic and provide you with a pathway to improving it.

WHY IS YOUR SHOULDER PAINFUL?

Shoulder impingement was the most common diagnosis for shoulder pain. It is defined as compression of structures in the shoulder, such as the rotator cuff, as the arm is raised. This supposedly damaging form of compression is due to a lack of space between bones in the shoulder. However, is this diagnosis borne out in the research? We now know that approximately 50% of non-painful shoulders impinge, and corrective



Physical assessment of shoulder pain.

decompression surgery has been shown not to improve pain or function more than placebo or exercise therapy. Further studies show that less space between bones in the shoulder does not produce more pain. Therefore, we cannot say shoulder impingement is a problem, and it is likely a normal finding that need not be corrected.

Incorrect posture is another proposed cause of shoulder pain. In reality, it is less often the cause of pain and more often

the result of it. Posture is determined by many influences, such as genetics, mood, illness, and mental health. Correct posture and form is useful to improve performance in sport or activities, but there isn't strong evidence that it contributes to shoulder pain. One can become obsessed with how they sit or position their shoulders, but there is no perfect posture, and posture should not be pathologised.

Rotator cuff tendinopathy and tears are another group of causes of shoulder pain that are not reliably supported by the research. These changes are seen in a person's painful shoulder and concurrently in their non-painful shoulder, suggesting rotator cuff changes are not the cause of their pain. However, an increase in the size of an existing tear or a full-thickness tear can increase the likelihood of pain. Additionally, the presence of inflammation in the shoulder is more prevalent in those with shoulder pain. So we can say that shoulder structures matter, but they are not the be-all and end-all of the problem.

WHAT IMPROVES SHOULDER PAIN?

Surgery is commonly used to treat shoulder impingement, but, as discussed above, impingement is not a tenable cause of shoulder pain and should not be corrected. Surgery should be considered first in specific or severe cases of full-thickness rotator cuff tears. However, people with non-traumatic tears seem to improve equally as well with conservative treatments such as exercise as they do with surgery. In these cases, surgery, which costs at least twice as much as conservative management, with no associated benefit, may be a poor first approach.

Exercise can improve shoulder pain, and it is the only universally recommended treatment throughout the guidelines. It may be as effective as surgery in reducing pain, but it is cost-effective, presents a low risk of harm, and has a multitude of secondary benefits. It is also helpful for people who have become fearful of movement as a result of their pain and would benefit from learning less painful ways of moving. As an adjunct to exercise, manual therapy, such as massage, may improve pain by desensitising and reducing threat in the painful areas.

The biggest predictors of improvement are non-structural, such as fear of movement, self-efficacy, and pain catastrophising. In the majority of cases, structural factors such as severity of impingement do not determine how you will improve. Your MRI is not your destiny, and, according to the evidence, you can get better irrespective of your impingement or muscle tear.



Exercise therapy for shoulder pain.

What matters most is your belief in your ability to recover, confidence in moving your shoulder, expectations and optimism in relation to rehabilitation, and confidence in your clinician. Fortunately, physiotherapists are well-equipped to help you improve your confidence and fear, coach you to less painful movement, and return to life as it was before shoulder pain.

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PORCHESTER CENTRE

FACILITATING ACTIVITY AND WELLNESS FOR ALL

PORCHESTER LEISURE CENTRE CELEBRATES ITS 100TH BIRTHDAY!

By Simon Plummer
General Manager at Porchester Centre

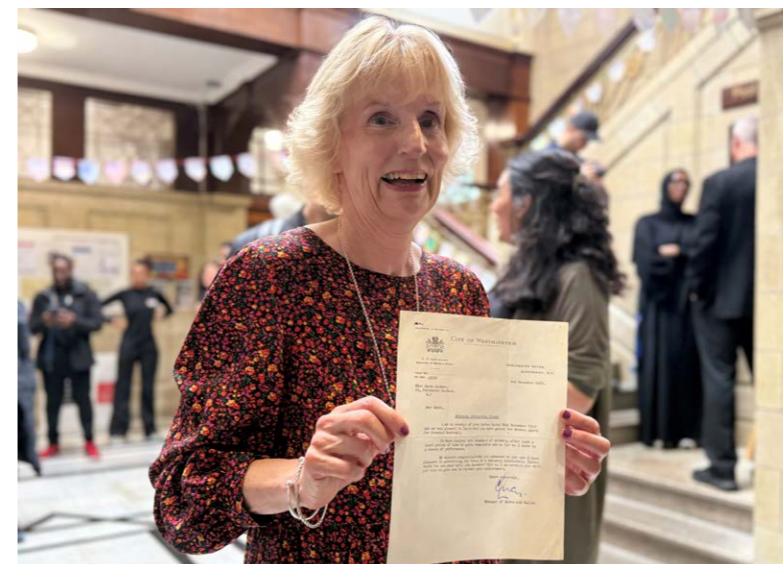


Celebrating in style. From left to right: Simon Plummer - Porchester Centre General Manager, Councillor Max Sullivan, Councillor and Locum Mayor Hamza Taouzzale, Joe Powell MP, Councillor Cara Sanquest, WCC Leader Councillor Adam Hug, Councillor Ellie Ormsby, Mark Hill, Westminster Senior Leisure Contract Manager and Councillor Ryan Jude.

The Porchester Centre celebrated its 100th Birthday by hosting an open day on Thursday 6 November 2025, inviting the local community to join in this monumental milestone.

On the day Councillor Cara Sanquest, Cabinet Member for Communities at Westminster City Council unveiled the plaque in the presence of many residents, Councillors and Westminster Staff.

Councillor Sanquest, said;
"I am delighted to mark the centenary of the iconic Porchester Centre in the heart of Bayswater. It has played a vital role in the cultural and community life of Westminster for the past 100 years. Over recent years, Westminster City Council has invested £6 million pounds in improvements to the building, ensuring the centre remains fit for the future and continues to be a vibrant community facility for generations to come."



Sarah Joiner, with a Porchester Centre swimming certificate from 1969.

We invited Sarah Joiner, one of our longest-serving members to join the celebrations. She reflected on her experiences at the centre over the years and shared her cherished memories with the team.

"I like the fact Porchester Centre is a vintage, listed building. It's still the same building since I first visited 60 years ago. It has changed over the years but in certain ways it hasn't changed at all, which is important. We are lucky in Westminster to be able to swim and exercise in beautiful and interesting buildings.

My favourite thing about Porchester Centre is the lovely staff and members who go there. You build communities - you swim with



The celebrations were well publicised and well attended. Here's to another 100 years...

the same people at the same time every day, so you get to know each other, and you see each other outside of the centre and say hello to them. There's a partially sighted woman who swims with us in the morning; there's just extraordinary people who go there."



Westminster Sporting Champions Niloufar Rezaei - Triathlete and Charlotte Rowe - International Basketball player.



The amazing anniversary cake made by Angela Emanuel-Carr - Relationship Officer Westminster City Council.



Councillor Ellie Ormsby and Councillor Cara Sanquest cut the 100th anniversary cake.

PORCHESTER GENERAL ENQUIRIES
 For any enquiries re the Porchester Centre please email the General Manager Simon Plummer on simonplummer@everyoneactive.com

PORCHESTER HALL ENQUIRIES
 Please email porchesterhallevents@everyoneactive.com or visiteveryoneevents.com

From the Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens

Photography:
Paul Shelley
Ryan Gill
Rob Dowling
Sue Price

Sue Price

Chairman, Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens

*"There is no time like Spring,
When life's alive in everything"*

Christina Rossetti

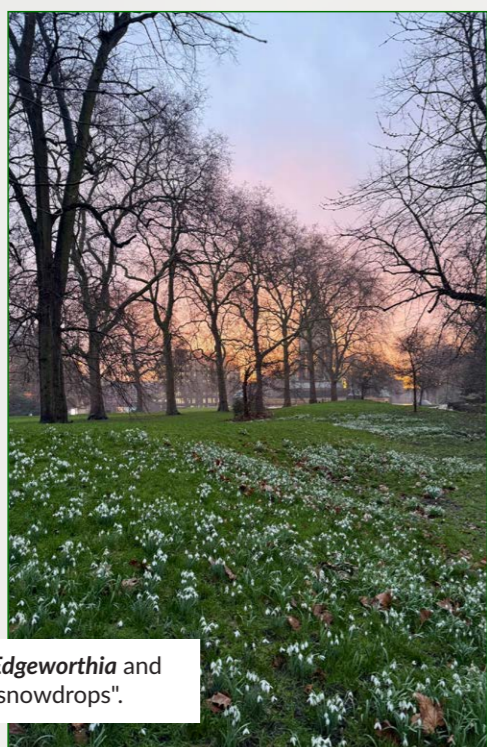
This time last year I seem to remember my quote included "Fill dyke February..." and it certainly could be repeated here.

Through grim soaking conditions, masses of spring flowers have been appearing and are worth looking out for. Swathes of snowdrops, first of all in the muddiest locations, still look magical. My favourite *Edgeworthia* (a shrub now planted in several areas of both Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park close to the Cavalry Memorial) is splendid. Tucked behind the kiosk close to the Albert Memorial, its white golf ball buds held still for winter months.

Suddenly, a week or so ago, they burst open to show their glorious chrome-yellow scented flowers. Close by are several varieties with fiery red flowers but these are not great growers like my yellow one. Head Gardener, Russell Stevens, told me this corner is where all planting has the same common exotic origin from the lower mountains of the Himalayas, from Northern Burma (Myanmar), China and Vietnam. Wonderful.



Sue's favourite *Edgeworthia* and "swathes of snowdrops".



MANAGING, PLANNING AND PLANTING

Along the South Flower Walk, you may have seen lots of cleared areas, piles of dead wood and tree and shrub-cuttings all stacked up. Why not removed? It usually is, and the area kept very smart. Russell told us that a direction has gone out that no green waste can be taken to be dealt with at the Leaf Pen.



Russell Stevens has been working hard along the South Flower Walk.

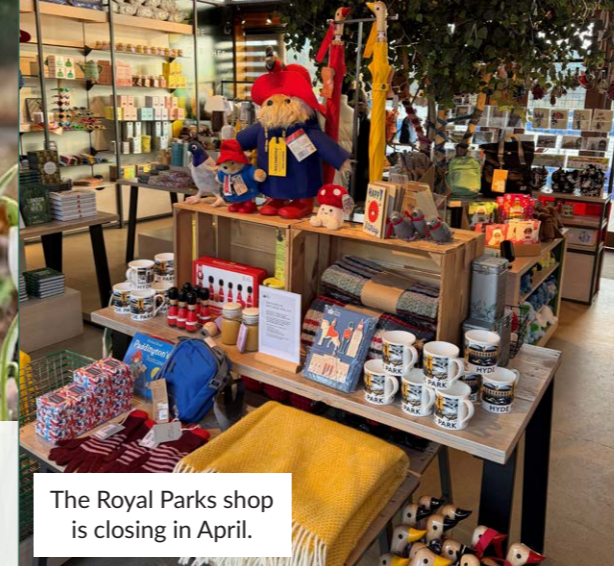
Did you know there was such a thing? And despite its rather small-sounding name, it is a very large space behind Peter Pan, close to Physical Energy. Surrounded by trees, it copes with loads of green gardening waste from all the central London parks, carried in by trucks and other large garden contractors' vehicles, which is dumped in huge pens and gradually turned into excellent quality compost to be reused in the parks.

Unfortunately, large cracks have appeared in the concrete tracks in this area, and so further deliveries have been stopped until the area can be restored.

So, don't be surprised by the stacks of greenery spotted around the parks which are then dealt with on the spot by even more large equipment items.

The plan is that along the length of the South Flower Walk path, there will be a band of small flowering shrubs, about a metre or so wide, which will form blocks of colour. These will be backed by taller, interesting plantings and trees which will give privacy from the Kensington Road traffic.

In the central crossing points and at the ends, there will be blasts of showy colours from masses of bedding plants. Patience will be needed, but it's good to look forward.



The Royal Parks shop is closing in April.

SHOP! SHOP! SHOP!

Some of you may have visited the Royal Parks Shop based in the boat house on Serpentine Road in Hyde Park.

It has been open for about three years and has had some attractive stock which has, in my view, improved over the last year. I thought it was a good place to shop especially just before Christmas, and I was a keen customer. Unfortunately, the decision has been made to close the shop in April, and before then, in the next few weeks, there will be many bargains at very reduced prices. So do have a look.

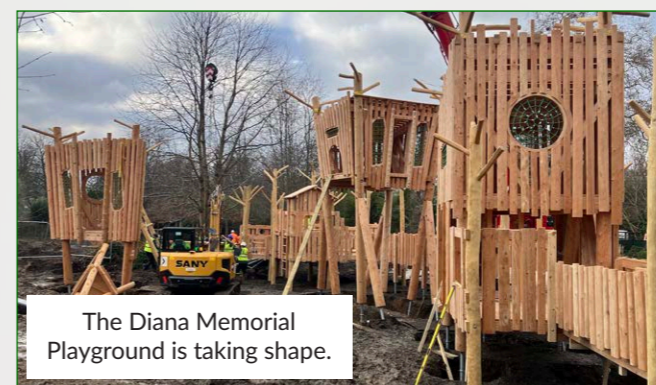
HAPPY DAYS

Another update on the Princess Diana Playground transformation. And don't forget the Elfin Oak.

I make no apologies for updating you on one of the most exciting projects for children the parks have ever seen.

The new high tree house walk is in place, and if you were walking up the Broad Walk in Kensington Gardens towards the end of January, you may have been amazed to see it arriving in pieces on a low-loader, all the way from its creators in Bavaria.

The galleon was looking impressive when constructed in Germany but will have been disassembled to be transported towards the end of February. The opening will be in early summer, exciting landscaping around the features and construction of all the other pieces of equipment for all children is continuing at pace.



The Diana Memorial Playground is taking shape.



So cute, the Elfin Oak.



Don't forget the Elfin Oak which is undergoing refurbishment and restoration. Work has started and should be finished around late May, so it will look as smart and attractive as its playground neighbour. The Friends have provided half the funding for this project and have looked forward to this little Cinderella being cheered up for a long time.

SPRING SPRUCING

I can report on plenty of doing-up and smartening-up this spring, quite apart from the playground.

The running of the tennis, bowls and PADEL centre in Hyde Park is reverting to the Royal Parks and it will be managed alongside the boating, and the Lido by the same team. Before they relaunch the new business, the pavilion at the tennis centre is being spruced up and the toilets are being refurbished. They were badly in need of this. So, while the facilities are in the middle of building work, there are temporary mobile changing spaces and toilets. Catering will be taken over by Colicci who are the concession-holders of the Italian Gardens café, as well as the Lido and the kiosks.

The Lido Cafe too is undergoing a refurb and work is taking place on its toilets as well. Colicci has won the bid to continue running the concessions. Extensions of their storage and other catering improvements at the Lido will help them to continue to deliver an excellent service to all of us park visitors.

So, as spring warms up and days get longer, we are leaving February behind and look forward to many new things to enjoy in both "our" parks.



A cherry tree looking rather splendid as spring approaches.

Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens
Old Police House, Hyde Park W2 2UH
contact@friendshpkg.org.uk | www.friendshpkg.org.uk



Serpentine News

Our regular Serpentine feature opens with news of an exhibition by one of Britain's best-loved contemporary artists. David Hockney's work is celebrated for its vibrant colours and joyful optimism, and his exhibition at Serpentine, which recently opened and runs until late August, will be hugely popular.

As the imagery is so gorgeous we have dedicated two pages to David Hockney, and then overleaf you can read news of another exhibition at Serpentine **Picture Making** by British artist, Cecily Brown.

DAVID HOCKNEY: A YEAR IN NORMANDIE AND SOME OTHER THOUGHTS ABOUT PAINTING



David Hockney, London, 2023 © David Hockney
Photo Credit: Jean-Pierre Gonçalves de Lima.

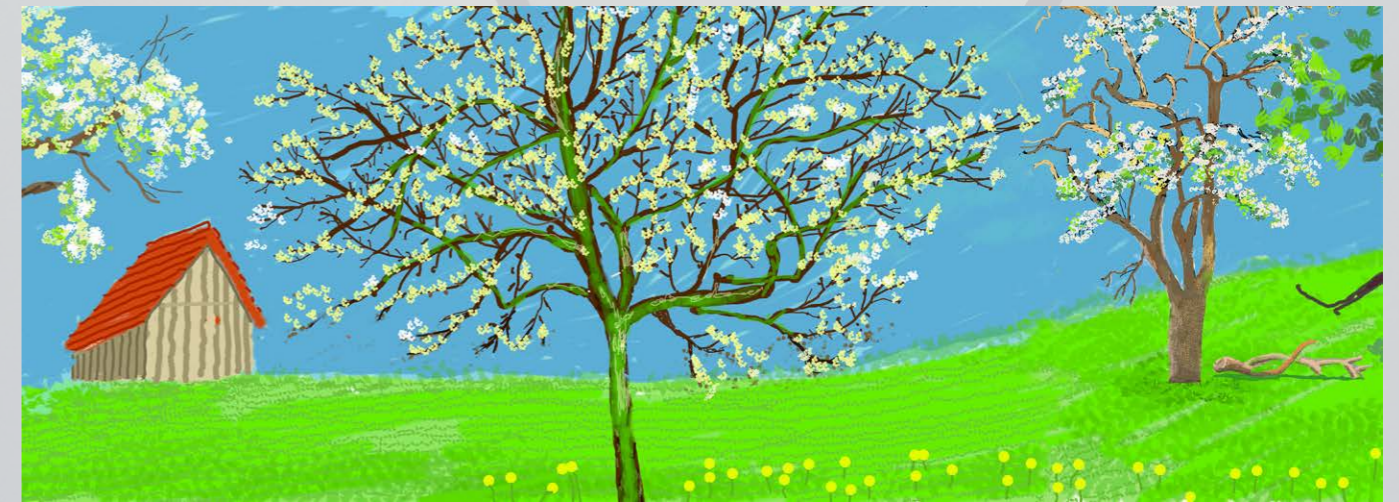
Serpentine is honoured to announce an exhibition of new and recent works by David Hockney, *A Year in Normandie and Some Other Thoughts about Painting*. Presented at Serpentine North from 12 March to 23 August, the exhibition will showcase seminal works, shown in the UK for the first time. Admission will be free to the exhibition which is the artist's first at Serpentine.

David Hockney said: "I'm excited to present an exhibition at Serpentine in 2026 on such a momentous year for the Bayeux Tapestry, one of the oldest and most remarkable artworks."

The exhibition is conceived in close collaboration with the artist and brings Hockney's celebrated ninety-metre-long frieze *A Year in Normandie* to London for the first time. This monumental work captures the changing seasons at the artist's former studio in Normandy. In the context of the exhibition at Serpentine, it opens a dialogue with the surrounding nature of Kensington Gardens.

David Hockney is interested in how art and technology can come together in new ways. Inviting viewers to slow down and notice the extraordinary within the everyday, Hockney's new paintings extend his lifelong fascination with the act of looking, affirming his belief that simple beauty is worth celebrating.

**AT SERPENTINE NORTH
12 MARCH - 23 AUGUST 2026**



Copyright information - All images: A Year in Normandie (detail), 2020-2021, composite iPad painting © David Hockney.



**OUR THANKS GO TO NICOLAS SMIRNOFF -
HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS AT SERPENTINE**

>>> OVERLEAF - CECILY BROWN: PICTURE MAKING

KEEPING TO THE RIGHT IN CITY HALL

RAIN, RAIN GO AWAY!

Early spring in SEBRALAND has been wet, wet, wet. It has rained continuously. While the weather has been bleak, national politics is little better.

More happily, with fewer than three months to the London Borough Elections (Thursday 7 May), I'm busy knocking on doors across both the City of Westminster and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea talking (and listening) with local people. SEBRA folk are impressive and very knowledgeable about our local communities. I'm getting my steps in!

GREAT CANDIDATES AND SOME BIG NAMES

Both Bayswater and Lancaster Gate in Westminster are 'swing' target Council Wards, which will decide who runs the City Council for 2026-2030. Labour or Tory? That's the question...

Pembridge Ward across the Council border in RBKC is a similar 'swing' Ward. I'm glad to say, whatever the air war of national politics, local people really matter. We Conservatives have selected amazing potential public servants. This is in contrast to Labour, who have a record number of retirements of Councillors who have only served one four-year term, including my successor as the constituency Assembly Member, as well as defections almost every week across London.

Conservative candidates in Bayswater Ward include a former Lord Mayor of Westminster and founder of a fantastic loneliness in older people charity (**Christabel Flight**), a former national newspaper editor and energetic soccer mum (**Emily Sheffield**). They say "If you're good enough you're old enough", well there's a student too

(Mark Tozer). In Lancaster Gate Ward is a team of committed activists (**Jonny Goff**, **Blessings Kaseke** and **Philip Stephenson-Oliver**). And finally for SEBRALAND, in Hyde Park Ward we have three energetic local campaigners standing (**Greg Ero**, **Elliot Keck** and **Arran Wedderburn**).

JUDGEMENT CALL - TONY BLAIR AND PETER MANDELSON



Peter Mandelson and Tony Blair feature in Channel 4's re-run of the 97-07 Premiership. Poor timing indeed.

Timing is almost EVERYTHING in life. Channel 4 must be kicking themselves for launching a three episode/four-hour television replay of Tony Blair's 1997-2007 premiership a week after Keir Starmer has been humiliated by the public shaming of Blair's Prince of Darkness, Peter Mandelson. Judgement is all in public life. Do Starmer or Blair have any?

TWO ALANS: JOHNSON AND MILBURN - POLITICIANS WITH IDEAS TO MAKE OUR COUNTRY BETTER

Door knocking is fascinating. One of our residents effectively ran the country under a 1970s Prime Minister. Neither he nor I can understand why 'Never Here Keir' didn't listen to Blair's two former heavyweight Cabinet Ministers.



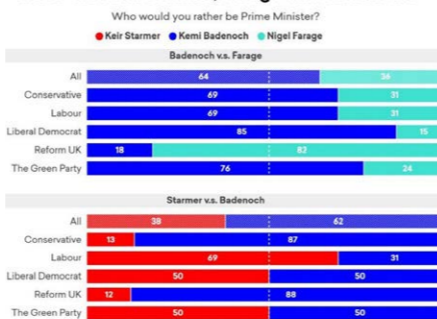
Councillor Tony Devenish
Knightsbridge & Belgravia Ward Councillor and Former London Assembly Member

Former Postman Johnson has publicly called for graduates to be allowed to repay their university tuition fees using RPI, rather than the CPI 'rip off' extortionate interest rates. CPI kills aspiration amongst our young and even middle-aged Brits. Milburn is working hard to shine a spotlight on the shame that Government is ignoring the plight of the so-called NEETS: **Not in Education, Employment or Training**. Nearly one million young people on the scrap heap. What EXACTLY is the purpose of Starmer's Government?

GOOD NEWS - KEMI BADENOCH MP

Yes, it's a long time to the 2029 inevitable late General Election, as Labour desperately clings on to power, but Conservative Leader Kemi Badenoch is already polling better than any other national leader.

Head to head: Starmer, Farage and Badenoch



In preferred Prime Minister polling Kemi Badenoch performs very well.

I've seen her speak live three times this year. Though I can be an old cynic, I am hugely impressed with Kemi.

A DECADE OF SADIQ KHAN - WILL HE STAND AGAIN?

I feel like a broken record reporting that, yet again, our Mayor of London has done next to nothing since the last issue of SEBRA NEWS W2 to report. Though he has threatened to stand for a fourth term in May 2028, as he celebrates a decade as Mayor of London this May.



A decade in charge. Will Sadiq Khan stand for a fourth term?

Enough words have been written about the Manchester parliamentary by-election in Denton & Gorton - I'm afraid divisive multi-party politics is here to stay.

Could Sadiq sneak a fourth term? Possibly, and I note that the ReformUK London Mayoral candidate and Lancaster Gate one-term Councillor retiree is in a libel mud fight with a former Reform MP.

BELOW - 'DODGY' CRYPTO V 'DOUR' UNDERTAKERS

Sorry, I couldn't resist these contrasting images of social media silliness from *The Spectator*. I think it's fairly clear which image is which...



WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS: THURSDAY 7 MAY

OUR PRIORITIES FOR WESTMINSTER

- 1 Safe Streets:** Crackdown on crime and anti-social behaviour with strong enforcement.
- 2 Clean City:** Clean, green and high-quality public spaces.
- 3 Value for Money:** Sensible spending, better services, cut waste.
- 4 Transport for All:** Championing a safe and accessible transport network that keeps Westminster moving.
- 5 Caring Conservatism:** Compassion with action, creating opportunity.

WESTMINSTER DESERVES BETTER THAN SAME OLD LABOUR.

TELL US WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU... and what matters to our community. Visit www.westm.news/say or scan the QR code.

VOTE CONSERVATIVE ON 7TH MAY TO DELIVER FOR WESTMINSTER

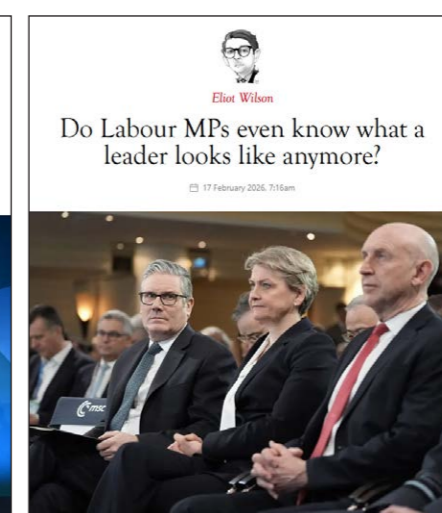
THURSDAY 7 MAY: WESTMINSTER COUNCIL CONSERVATIVES - A PICTURE RATHER THAN MORE WORDS

My Leader, Councillor Paul Swaddle, is getting round the entire City - well done Paul, here's some pavement policies, in contrast to four years of next to nothing from Councillor Hug and his Labour Council.



LABOUR IS RED, WE'RE ALL FEELING BLUE, THEY'VE TRIED ED ALREADY, HE HASN'T A CLUE!

A last minute inclusion. I couldn't resist asking your editor to drop in the great cartoon from *The Times'* Peter Brookes depicting Ed Milliband and Angela Rayner as Wallace & Gromit.



AND FINALLY... A PRE-ELECTION MAILING

Your Chairman tells me that SEBRA will be sending a pre-election mailing two weeks before the polling stations open, so do watch out for that.

Councillor Tony Devenish

- tony@tonydevenish.com
- 07917 174 084
- @Tony_Devenish
- TonyDevenishAM
- tonydevenisham



The Property Market

"A PRICE-SENSITIVE MARKET" IN BAYSWATER

The Bayswater and W2 property market has undergone a clear transition over the past three years. Transaction levels have declined materially, with 662 sales recorded in 2023, 645 in 2024 and 363 in 2025. The reduction in activity is not simply cyclical noise; it reflects a market that has shifted from being momentum-driven to price-sensitive.

Flats have seen the most pronounced change. There were 541 flat sales in 2023, 517 in 2024 and just 304 in 2025. The average flat price fell to approximately £896,000 in 2025 with a median of £665,000, compared with a 2024 median of £860,000 and an average of £1.22m. The data indicates values have adjusted to meet affordability rather than the other way around.

We are firmly in a price-sensitive market, not a demand-led one. Buyers are active, but they are selective and analytical. The first two to four weeks of marketing is now critical: correctly priced and well-presented properties generate strong interest and offers, while overpriced instructions often stagnate and ultimately require material reductions to transact.

Changing buyer demographics are also reshaping the market. There are fewer overseas purchasers and a larger share of domestic buyers who are mortgage-dependent and cost-aware. As a result, service charge levels have become a

major pricing factor. Flats within blocks carrying high annual service charges are consistently taking the longest to sell and are experiencing the largest price reductions. The market is not aspirational at present; buyers are buying value rather than lifestyle positioning.

Houses tell a different story. In 2024 the average house price was £3.7m with a median of £2.45m. In 2025 the average rose slightly to £3.81m and the median to £2.63m. However, transaction levels shifted sharply: after 73 house sales in 2024, only 47 were recorded in 2025, a reduction of roughly 36%. This does not necessarily reflect stronger demand, but rather reduced liquidity. Many owners appear willing to wait rather than accept discounted pricing, which may indicate the market is approaching a pricing floor.

W2 is therefore operating as two markets: a finance-sensitive apartment sector and a scarcity-supported housing sector. The constraint in the current environment is not a lack of property coming to market, but a lack of buyers willing to proceed unless pricing aligns with perceived value.

The wider prime market context remains important. A £51m sale recorded at Park Modern on Queensway in February 2026 demonstrates that ultra-prime demand still exists, but it sits almost entirely separate from the mainstream local market. These sales influence sentiment but not pricing for the typical W2 transaction.

CHESTERTONS

For sellers, the message is straightforward. Correct pricing and presentation are decisive. Buyers are informed and patient, and properties that launch competitively continue to sell efficiently. Those that do not are seeing longer marketing periods and larger reductions before achieving a sale.

** This analysis has been prepared using the latest available Land Registry data.*

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 or 020 7298 5900.



UK RESIDENTIAL MARKET QUARTERLY UPDATE

Both main UK indices showed house price growth evaporating last year. Supply built in 2025 following a stamp duty cliff edge in April and as more landlords left the lettings sector due to red tape and higher taxes, which produced downwards pressure on prices. Meanwhile, demand was undermined during months of tax speculation ahead of the Budget. Now there is more clarity and mortgage rates continue to head lower, we expect stability rather than the feelgood factor to return in the early months of 2026.

Despite growing risk of domestic political uncertainty, we think UK house price growth should climb to 3% by the end of this year. Housing transactions increased after the summer as supply rose, mortgage rates stabilised, and some buyers acted ahead of possible tax hikes in the Budget.

While others held off due to the pre-Budget uncertainty, the number of mortgage approvals in November climbed to 8% higher than the five-year average.

Meanwhile the number of residential transactions recorded by HMRC was up by 7% over the same period. The growing availability of sub-4% mortgages has underpinned demand, which should continue in 2026. Financial markets in mid-January were almost fully pricing in two quarter-point cuts this year.

Get in touch with your local property expert today.

Knight Frank data, January 2026



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