



Marylebone Association

Newsletter December 2023

Dear {Contact_First_Name},

A Message from the New Chair

It was a privilege to take over as Chair from Julie Redmond at our November AGM and I would like to thank Julie for the energy and enthusiasm that she brought to her role. We all wish her well in her future plans.

There is a saying, "The only constant in life is change," and there have been times in the past year or so when a little more "constant" and a little less "change" would have been welcome. I suspect 2024 will be just as interesting, with competing pressures as retailers consolidate, the nighttime economy tries to expand, and cars, pedestrians, cycles, and scooters all compete for space and street crime becomes an increasing concern.

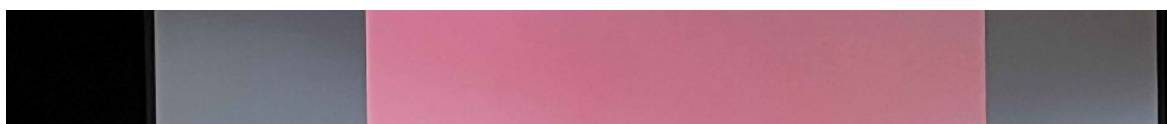
Although we tend to focus on problems, we should also recognise the benefits of living in Marylebone. We are lucky to live in a unique area of London, well served by retail, transport, arts, magnificent buildings and a vibrant entertainment sector.

In 2024, we will continue to focus on those developments which impact our members and represent their interests and views-which vary widely-to the relevant authorities. We won't win all the time but we will take a pragmatic approach in the best interests of our members.

On a lighter note, I would like to wish all members a very Happy Christmas and a safe and successful 2024.

Richard Lovell
Chairman Marylebone Association

The Marylebone Association AGM





The Marylebone Association AGM was held on November 16th 2023 at the Marylebone Theatre 35 Park Road NW1, commencing at approximately 7.10 pm. Michael Bolt the Hon. Secretary opened the meeting with a welcome to members present and thanked all for attending.

The Hon. Secretary explained the choice of venue (outside the MA boundaries) as representing an opportunity to support local art and culture initiatives particularly in their early stages.

The AGM 2022 minutes and Annual Report were proposed and seconded by members present, then voted for by show of hands. Both were accepted without dissent.

The outgoing chair, Julie Redmond then addressed the meeting. She first explained her decision not to stand for reelection as she was now a candidate in the forthcoming GLA elections she felt this could be seen to create a conflict with the non-political status of the Marylebone Association.

The Chair reported on the achievements in the past 12 months thanks to collaborative efforts by the whole committee. This included supporting/achieving the long term presence of the Sunday Farmers Market in Aybrook Street and following from that, successfully opposing the loss of the community space in the ground floor hall. The Chair mentioned the increasing discussion with the local police regarding crime/rough sleeping/hate crime.

The meeting proceeded to hear the Hon. Treasurer's Report and approve the 2022 Accounts. The Treasurer proceeded to detail various minor revisions to the Constitution which had been previously circulated in order to bring it up to date. These were then moved for approval and voted on and approved with one dissension .

The meeting then received the Planning Sub-committee Report from Neil Wilson who gave a run-through of all the major planning projects in the area, and those upcoming and impressed the audience with the large number of these.

The meeting then moved on to electing the Committee for the new year. The Officers proposed and elected were:

The Chair - Richard Lovell
The Hon. Secretary – Michael Bolt
The Hon Treasurer – Neil Ritson

Members of the Committee proposed and elected were:
Guy Austin, Martin Bikhit, Linda Davies, Rosemary Forgan,
Lois German, Niamh O'Keefe, Stephen Quinn, Julie Redmond,
Scott Storey and Neil Wilson

Co-opted members proposed and elected:
Stephen Thomas (HDRA) and Mark Gazaleh (PVA) by a show of hands

A full list of Officers, Committee and Sub-committee and Subgroup members will be made available on the website together with a more detailed summary of the meeting. The meeting then heard an address from the new Chair who thanked Julie for her hard work on behalf of the Association through the past year, and went on to single out committee members for the various contributions that they had made. Following that Cllr Barbara Arzymanow was invited to say a few words on the stage on various local matters of concern..

Written questions were then taken, and answered by various members of the committee and councillors/estate representatives present in the room. Topics being: the future of the Marylebone Square Community Space; the continuing absence of a Post Office on the High Street; congestion on Regent Street; the imminent traffic changes on North Cavendish Square/Mortimer Street making them 2 way; cycling issues in the area; and the expansion of the Night Time economy. The questions are now available to read in full on the [MA website](#).

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm and members retired to the Theatre Bar for refreshments.

Marylebone Village Festive Lights



On Thursday 9 November, Marylebone Village celebrated the beginning of the Christmas season with a festive light switch-on in support of mental health charity partner Mind in Brent, Wandsworth and Westminster. This year, we are enjoying a brand new sustainable Christmas lights display lighting up the streets of Marylebone Village.

The Marylebone Association hosted a stand, with gingerbread decorating and candy cane for the children. Many of Marylebone Village's favourite shops, cafes,

bars and restaurants joined together to offer visitors a huge range of value-added offers, festive experiences, exclusive discounts, and specially created menus. All in all, a wonderful annual event in the Marylebone diary for residents and business.

The evening was packed with fun workshops, an artisan on-street stall market, roaming live music and late night shopping. There was a range of festive activities for all ages including a Santa's Grotto, a Ferris Wheel, wreath making workshops and the famous charity tombola. However the perennial complaint from families with young kids is why the Santa queue takes up one or more hours of their evening. It is very stressful for parents with young children to stand in a queue for so long, and miss the rest of the fun.

We would make a plea for the organisers to double up on the Santas in future in order to halve the queuing time! We remember this was a great solution previously – but quite a few years ago.

St Marylebone-Church of the Year



The National Church Awards as reported by London TV revealed 17 UK churches as winners in a prestigious ceremony at Mercers' Hall, London last month.

At the end of the evening, HRH The Duke of Gloucester announced that the coveted "Church of The Year" award had gone to St Marylebone Parish Church.

The Revd Canon Dr Stephen Evans, Ginny Simmonds (director of heritage and events) and Ashley Nixon (director of development) received the award on behalf of the whole church team.

The Chair of the National Churches Trust, Sir Philip Rutnam, said: "As a judging panel we were unanimous in our support for this year's winner. It epitomises everything that a successful, sustainable and open church should be... It provides worship, vital services, and is a place that is rooted in its location; available to all. They have an excellent music programme, a really cool arts space and such a breadth of activities that are there for local people and also for visitors. There is a lot here that we can all learn from."

As part of St Marylebone's application, the church team provided a description of their achievements:

“We are open every 365 days a year. Sitting at the heart of central London, we are a much-needed central London community resource. We endeavour to create a warm and inviting environment in which all feel welcome and included. We run an extensive music programme including The St Marylebone Festival which offers affordable access to musical and cultural performances. We recently opened an art space in the church crypt which allows artists to exhibit and sell work in central London.

“We have volunteers for events and throughout the week who welcome visitors and provide a friendly face and information about the church and we also offer weekly historical tours.”

They could have also added that a large part of the church crypt is home to the Marylebone Medical Centre, used and valued by many locals, and that they regularly let their spaces out at preferential rates to local community groups such as the Marylebone Forum and our own Association, indeed we had the privilege of holding our AGM there as recently as last year.

St Marylebone also won a Church Tourism award and was nominated for the Young Architect or Surveyor of the Year for the work of Mary Duckham (BSc MArch ARB).

Marylebone Farmers Market Accolade



In a further coup for Marylebone, our local Farmers market is in the final three of the very best farmers markets in the UK after the finalists were revealed by the Farm Retail Association.

Innovative and inspiring businesses from all corners of the country have been considered and Marylebone Farmers Market has been judged to be outstanding.

Run by London Farmers Markets, Marylebone Farmers Market celebrated its 20th year this year. The market takes place every Sunday 10am – 2pm with over 40 amazing farm and food stalls, offering a uniquely fresh and essential service to Londoners

Chair of the Farm Retail Association, Emma Mosey said: “Farm shops and farmers markets continue to be the nation’s retail beacons for sourcing fresh and nutritious produce with low food miles, from passionate and knowledgeable often family-run, independent businesses.

“It is right that we celebrate the crucial role that these invaluable food and drink

It is right that we celebrate the crucial role that these invaluable food and drink retailers play at the heart of the communities they serve. Running throughout our finalists are inspiring stories of innovation, consistent quality produce and customer service excellence: terrific achievements and qualities that have been demonstrated during a challenging period for retailers amid the ongoing cost-of-living crisis."

Ian Smith, Director at London Farmers Markets said: "This is great news for the farmers market and is down to the dedication and great food produced by the businesses that attend the market every Sunday, we'd like to pay tribute to them and thank the loyal customers of Marylebone who shop at the farmers market every week come rain or shine, snow or pandemic."

"The Marylebone Farmers Market's future was uncertain for a while with the new development being built on their former trading pitch in the Moxon Street Car park, "but massive community support and support from the City of Westminster has secured the farmers market's home on the street for many years to come."

What better place is there to come and buy or order ingredients for your Christmas lunch?

Seymour Leisure Centre



The complete closure (until 2026) of this well-used facility is now about three months away. Redevelopment of the Centre is a major multi-million pound investment in our ward, which among other things, will give Marylebone Library a permanent home at long last. And yet, many clients of Seymour's fitness classes are still in the dark as to what access they will have to alternative provision, as was promised by Council officials in the many consultations on the redevelopment.

It seems that the task of finding and communicating these alternatives has been left on the shoulders of the commercial partner at the Centre, Everyone Active (EA).

The company is doing what it can and, of course, operates other Local Authority centres in the borough. But capacity across the fitness sector is finite and many "premium" gyms are not an option for the many residents from diverse backgrounds that use the Seymour. The fear is that these residents will end up being deprived of an affordable or genuinely accessible alternative. This could have a direct impact on health and well-being in our community.

McDonald's Settle on 2.30am

Westminster Council have reached a last-minute out-of-court agreement with McDonald's Edgware Road.

Earlier this year, the Council's Licensing Committee refused to grant a 24-hour operating licence for McDonald's on Edgware Road, part of the Capital Arches Group (CAG) franchise. CAG appealed the ruling and it was due to be heard in the City Magistrates Court on 21st November with residents from the Harrowby & District Residents' Association (HDRA) ready to be called as witnesses alongside the Met Police.

On 17th November, an agreement was reached that avoided the need to go to court. The signalling of a compromise from CAG so late in the day was, it seems, part of a strategy to cast the Council in a bad light in the eyes of Magistrates, should it not engage with CAG and seek such a means to settle the matter.

Having been approached with a suggested cut-off for McDonald's operations (incl. night-time deliveries) at 3 am across the week, WCC counter-offered with 2:30 am limited to Fridays and Saturdays only. This was accepted. Conditions, including security personnel at the entrance to the unit, dedicated parking for delivery cyclists and improved litter-picking also apply.

Edgware Road & Cumulative Impact



Last month we looked at the recent cumulative impact report from WCC and the correlation between the huge numbers of licensed outlets in the West End (basically the area covered by Soho and St James) and the amount of crime in the area, which represents an astonishing 66% of all crime in Westminster and 74% of public realm crime.

Although we have nothing like that in Marylebone, (at least at present) we do have two areas which feature in the cumulative impact report. One around the

Oxford Street area, which we looked at last month, and the other on Edgware Road, which we examine this month.

The Edgware Road area accounted for 1% (373) of all overnight theft, drug offences, robberies, violence against persons and sexual offences for the whole of Westminster last year.

Theft was the most prevalent crime type of the five in this area, accounting for 53% (197) of these crimes. This was followed by violence against the person with 33% (122).

Edgware Road maintained similar crime levels throughout the area, however, offences appear particularly concentrated on the south side, near to Marble Arch.

Overnight anti-social behaviour and noise complaints were slightly less prevalent in this area compared to the other areas that were looked at within Westminster, accounting for 1% (91 and 45 respectively) of Westminster's overall offences for both.

Notably, there are only 24 unique licensed premises in the area, 54% (13) of these premises were restaurants and 21% (5) were shops, stores or kiosks. Even taking into account the size of the area, the total number is comparatively low.

From 11am to 8pm, the Edgware Road area had a lower proportion of these premises open than the borough average. However, from 9pm onwards to 6am, there was a higher percentage of premises open in comparison to the Westminster average.

The area had a slightly less drastic drop in the percentage of open premises between 9pm to 10pm (79% to 75%, 19 to 18) in comparison to the other areas. The most significant drop comes between 10pm and 11pm (75% to 42%, 18 to 10), followed by the drop from 12am to 1am (38% to 21%, 9 to 5), which suggests these hours as primary dispersal periods.

This confirms that in many ways, the problems in Edgware Road are less linked to licensed premises than most other areas, which is the reason that on the last Licensing Review it lost its cumulative impact status. The crime was still there but more connected with problems that don't need a licence, such as shisha outlets.

It is generally acknowledged that the area seems to be in some sort of decline with an increasing begging problem, rough sleeping and low level crime. Many of the shops are sublet and their uses are difficult to control. There is a group that has been set up to tackle this and other issues in the area called the Edgware Road Strategy Group which involves Westminster officers and councillors, the police, the Portman Estate, TfL, the Church Estate and the Marble Arch BID.

In addition, there is the Edgware Road Placemaking Strategy which has commissioned architects and urban strategists, DSDHA to work up some ideas and public realm priorities for Edgware Road. The Placemaking Strategy is there to help support the delivery of the overall vision and is running workshop-style meetings for various stakeholder groups including residents. However there is no resident presence on the main Edgware Road Strategy Group, unlike on the Queensway Strategy Group in Bayswater, which otherwise is formed along similar lines.

M&S Win Right to Challenge

In November Marks & Spencer won the right to challenge in the High Court the decision by Communities Secretary Michael Gove to block the demolition and redevelopment of its Marble Arch store. This leaves the store free to proceed to the next stage which would be a judicial review of the Levelling Up Secretary's

the next stage which would be a judicial review of the Evening Up Secretary's decision.

Gove found that the development conflicted with development plan and heritage policies and would have a "significantly detrimental impact on the setting of Selfridges" department store nearby".

He also found that it conflicted with the National Planning Policy Framework, in that it failed to support the transition to a low-carbon future and would overall fail to encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings.

M&S CEO Stuart Machin said: "We have been clear from the very start that refurbishment of the existing store is not possible, so this is only the first step in the lengthy process of overturning the government's senseless decision to reject our Marble Arch proposal – the only retail-led regeneration on Oxford Street."

"But we will do everything necessary to secure a better future at Marble Arch for our local customers, our colleagues and our community."

It therefore looks like it will now be some time before we know what the future of this site will hold.

Concerns on Cavendish Square



In November our West End Ward Councillors held a further community meeting at Regent Hall, 275 Oxford Street to discuss anti-social behaviour and crime-related issues in and around Cavendish Square.

In attendance to provide an update, as well as answer any queries or concerns, were representatives from the Metropolitan Police and Westminster City Council.

Covid and the recent summer interruptions with Spiegeltents has meant that

Cavendish Square has seen a deterioration over the last few years. And now, anti-social behaviour and an influx of rough sleeping with accompanying detritus had begun to turn this open space into an unpleasant venue. This is the second Cavendish Square meeting, and unlike the first time round, on this occasion two police officers attended which made the exercise considerably more relevant. Westminster was also well represented by the past and present Neighbourhood Coordinators and a Senior City Inspector as well as Cllr Patric Lilly and Cllr Jessica Toale from the West End ward, and Cllr Barbara Arzymanow from Marylebone Ward.

Rather disappointingly this meeting was rather more sparsely attended by residents than the previous one, which must have been frustrating for the councillors. However, what was clear is that it is the rough sleeping throughout our ward (not just in the square) that was of most concern to all.

PC Chapman said he accepted that neighbourhoods need protection from the nuisance caused by begging and rough sleeping. He went on to highlight that police identify each individual sleeper but their first priority is to ensure welfare first. Not every street sleeper is part of an organised gang of beggars. In that regard he made the point that the police know who the regulars are – where they come from, how they got here and who controls them. The real problem is with the law and the courts.

The process requires multiple levels of warning before an arrest can be made in order to build a body of evidence to allow a possible prosecution. This means that the organised gangs are able to rotate their people to dodge the process. Even after an arrest the Crown Prosecution Service may throw the case out as a waste of time. “Time served” i.e. 24 hours in a cell, can be deemed sufficient.

PC Chapman also explained how about 5 years ago they conducted joint exercises with the immigration department to try and clear the begging gangs. Although they managed to deport some individuals the exercise was stopped by the courts as the practice was held to be ‘illegal’.

Finally, to nobodies surprise, he made the point that with scarce resource allocation police have to prioritise. Is it burglary or begging that is more important?

Finton Raman (former Neighbourhood Coordinator) and Chelsea Coleman (new Neighbourhood Coordinator) explained what WCC does to address street sleeping. They see it as WCC responsibility not the police. One serious difficulty is that not all street sleepers want help, or at least not the sort of help offered by Council working through Outreach.

As previously reported, the immediate problem of Cavendish Square will be solved by the upcoming 3-year closure for redevelopment in the underground car park – although this was meant to have commenced by now. When it finally does start presumably the problem will just be displaced elsewhere.

All the meeting really achieved was to highlight how difficult all this all is – and it certainly came up with no solutions. One plea was for more communication from residents to build a database with which WCC and police might be able to target certain activities or hot-spots. This requires us all to actively report issues through the various channels supplied by WCC.

We have a ward neighbourhood coordinator who will manage issues reported to her with Police, City Inspectors and public safety. As usual, it is important to first log any issues on the council's platform of choice, Report It. The link for that and other useful links can be found below:

[Report It](#) is a service provided by Westminster City Council. It allows residents and businesses to report street based issues such as dumped rubbish or faulty street lights.

[TFL Streetcare](#) report a problem tool

[Streetlink](#)

StreetLink is a platform that connects people rough sleeping in England and Wales to support provided by local authorities and charities

Parking Charge Increases

We heard back in June that changes were afoot for the parking fee structure and that it would soon become emission-based.

We have now got a step closer to this with the release of the proposed parking pay structure review. As this has now reached such a level of complexity that it defies a simple summary we do not proceed to go into the details at this stage - that can wait until we are certain that the scheme is to be implemented in the form presently set out.

The chief takeaways are that for most of those residents with older cars - the charge will be increasing - and ditto with visitor parking. As for the owners of electric vehicles - they are being brought into the payment system, albeit, at the moment at a reduced rate, whether visitors or residents.

This will incidentally result in a substantial increase in parking revenue.

The council presently receives around £48 million from parking charges and they estimate that the new scheme would take this up to £54 million. But this may well be a very conservative estimate - as the scheme is so complex with its array of different charging bands that it is impossible to accurately forecast the resulting increase in parking revenue.

However, the council, ever mindful of the case of *Cran v London Borough of Camden*, are careful to state that any increase in revenue is incidental to the main purpose of the fee structure revision. The scheme is WCC say, only propelled by "a desire to reduce vehicle emissions by giving a 'nudge' to those who park regularly in Westminster when making choices about vehicle use and ownership."

The case of *Cran* established that a local authority, cannot set or increase its charges with the motive of generating revenue. However, the creation of a surplus from increased parking charges will not in and of itself be unlawful providing the primary motivation for or intention of the increase is the achievement of certain lawful objectives.

So, the aim of the emissions-based charging scheme is to encourage the use of low-polluting vehicles and, by the same token, to discourage the use of those which are more polluting. This was established some time ago in the courts as a lawful objective.

As for the level of beneficial carbon impact - it is not possible to quantify what this may be as so many factors will be involved in determining the charge.

Whatever the improvement in emissions, the days of knowing in advance what it costs to park your car will be but a fond memory. We would like to see the new charges go on the parking bay signage, but as that would now require a billboard, visitors are likely only to know how much a session will cost them until they phone to book one.

A side effect of this is that for a number of drivers it will now hardly matter whether they bother to negotiate the new process or not as the cost of a penalty charge, if paid within 14 days, will now be little different to the cost a days parking. As WCC cannot determine the level of penalty charges, this situation is likely to continue for some time.

New BID for Fitzrovia Finalised

The results of the postponed ballot for the proposed West Fitzrovia Business Improvement District (BID) have now been announced. These votes are something of a formality as the electorate is made up of the business that the organisation is formed to benefit. Hence the majority of the business ratepayers in the proposed BID area who did vote, voted in favour of the proposal, both by aggregate rateable value (94.68%) and numbers voting (90.57%).

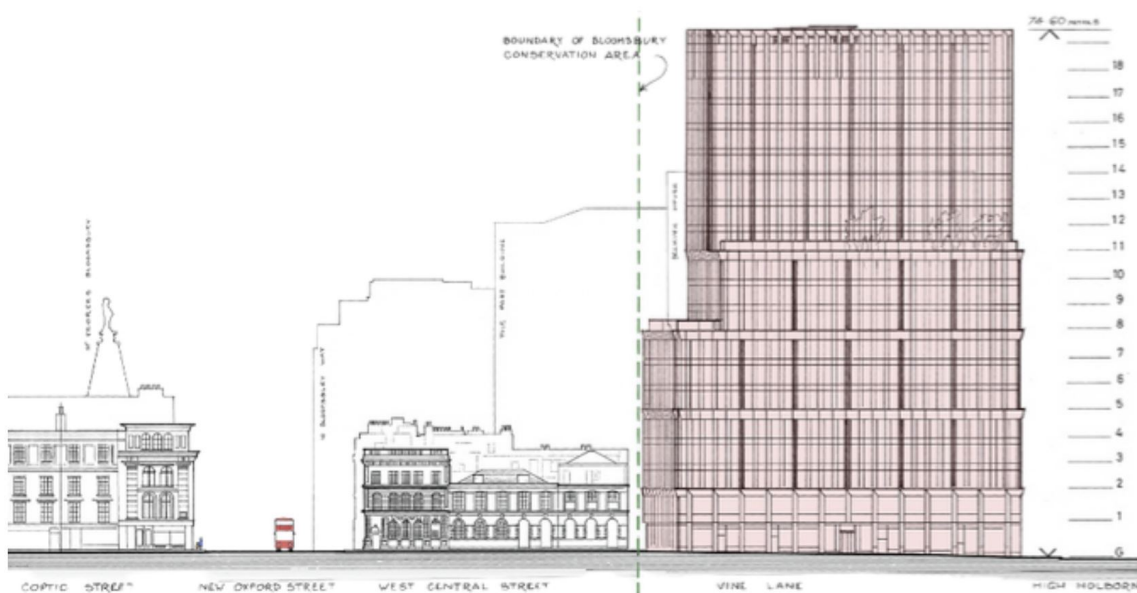
In total 53 out of the 168 electorates of eligible business ratepayers voted and this brings the total number of BIDs in the borough to 18.

The BID term for the West Fitzrovia BID will commence from 1 December 2023 to 30 November 2028.

Meanwhile Shaftesbury Capital have abandoned their plans to sell a portfolio of properties in the Fitzrovia district after bids reportedly fell short of expectations. Instead, the plan will be to sell the units individually or in smaller groups in the hopes that this will help generate more cash.

[West Fitzrovia Business Improvement District proposal.](#)

Monolith for Museum Street



The modern way of development is not to look at a site and see what sort of contribution it can make to the surrounding area - how it can reflect and complement the existing street and its surrounding context. No, it is to work out how every available square foot can be utilised and then build as tall as possible without reference or care to its surrounding context. Readers of this newsletter will be aware of several notable examples of this in Marylebone. But just across the border in Camden there is a still more blatant example.

That is the scheme for Selkirk House and Museum Street, the site of the old Travelodge building, which is already 17 stories high. The proposed scheme is 19 stories high and more bulky.

It has to be admitted the existing building hardly graces the area being built in 1968 and typical of the period, it would not be difficult to improve on it. But the

proposed replacement is so bland and of such monstrous size as to make even what stands there now appear a reasonable piece of urban development.

For over three years there has been a coordinated campaign to resist this by a coalition of amenity societies, residents associations and conservation groups - led by Save Museum Street (SMS), leading to one of the biggest campaigns against a single project Camden has ever seen.

A very large number of local residents sent in objections to the Planning Department, and the Bloomsbury Residents Action Group (BRAG) says that the statutory groups officially objecting include Historic England, The Georgian Group, The Victorian Society and SAVE Britain's heritage. Anne Clarke, London Assembly member for Barnet and Camden objected; as did Julian Fulbrook, ward councillor for Holborn and Covent Garden. The London School of Economics has objected, as well as Climate Emergency Camden, Seven Dials Trust, Covent Garden Area Trust, Covent Garden Community Association, the Soho Society, Bloomsbury CAAC, and Tenants and Residents Associations such as South Bloomsbury and Dudley Court.

Despite adverse comments from all these objectors, the Planning Officer's Report recommended approval, with a focus on how the development of the site will "assist in delivering the objectives of growth in the Tottenham Court Road Growth Area."

There was less focus on the immense carbon cost of this massive demolition and redevelopment. The officers' report makes for depressing reading, with the perceived benefits of "growth" being considered far more important than the attributes of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area - including the setting of the nearby British Museum and Hawksmoor's St George's Church.

But the effects will be felt further away, in adjoining areas in Covent Garden, Fitzrovia and Soho as it will be a blot on the skyline there. For this reason Westminster City Council had also objected to the tower's impact: "The proposed building will be highly visible from many vantage points. A key view affected is from Drury Lane. It is here where the development would appear monolithic against the more modestly scaled terraces in the foreground. Due to its height, the development would negatively impact upon views from within, and the setting of the Covent Garden Conservation Area."

Due to its size, the development will now have to be approved by the Mayor of London, this is hardly a high bar-he initially waved through the Marks & Spencer Marble Arch demolition (since reprieved) and much else besides that has done much to damage London's skyline.

Retrofit-the Way Forward

Hopefully Museum Street is an outlier. Elsewhere it seems that the days of free-for-all demolition of buildings (at least by the large developers-the rest of us are not even able to change the style of our front door) may be finally coming to an end.

New policies are in the pipeline to encourage retrofit as the best solution for the vast majority of buildings in Westminster and WCC will shortly commence consulting on policies which "will deliver the certainty needed to stimulate a virtuous circle of retrofit investment and carbon reduction."

Head of Planning in WCC, Geoff Barraclough says: "A successful modern city needs to evolve its built environment in response to the ever-changing needs of its population".

"But a successful modern city can no longer afford to provide these spaces simply

But a successful modern city can no longer afford to provide these spaces simply by replacing old buildings with new ones. The environmental cost of demolishing and rebuilding is simply too great. In Westminster alone, we estimate the carbon currently released from demolitions and redevelopments is the equivalent of heating 35,000 homes a year. As we move to our ambition of a net zero city by 2040, this is no longer acceptable. We need change”.

He cites IKEA as a good example. The retailer has refurbished the former Topshop on Oxford Street, replacing gas-fired boilers in this Grade II-listed structure with air-source heat pumps to power the building with renewable energy.

This comes at the same time as Secretary of State, Michael Gove’s decision to refuse to allow Marks & Spencer to demolish their building on Oxford Street. It is all part of the same message - developers are going to have a much harder task justifying total demolition in the future.

But there are still substantial obstacles in the way to the viability of retrofit- and one of them that could be removed overnight is outlined below.

The Curse of VAT

Perhaps the single most damaging fiscal blow to Britain's heritage made in living memory (and it is a very competitive field) was that by George Osborne in removing the VAT exemption on listed buildings in 2012 whilst retaining it on new builds.

James Gray, head of project and building consultancy at Cluttons said at the time: “Listed buildings are some of our country’s greatest assets. Removing the VAT exemption on alterations will mean the difference between a bright future and a miserable end, with potential investors and current owners simply unable to foot the bill for this extra expenditure.”

At the same time developers has a 20 per cent incentive to knock down older unlisted buildings to get the new build VAT relief rather than retrofit them. All this has caused immense damage to our heritage buildings throughout the years it has been in force.

In spite of persistent lobbying over these years, the voices of heritage organisations have been persistently ignored and we had little confidence that this would change anytime soon. But now that it is going to be more of a problem to demolish buildings generally, whether they are listed, heritage worthy or not, the large developers are putting on the pressure.

The mighty London Property Alliance has recognised the stupidity of such legislation in the wider field of retrofit generally, and the way in which VAT on any refurbishment creates a huge disincentive to the developer- as none of it is normally recoverable from the sale. They say that removing the tax would accelerate the transition to net zero carbon emissions and rapidly increase improvements in energy efficiency ratings for commercial and domestic properties.

Hence the body, which represents 400 real estate developers, investors and advisers across central London, is now pushing for VAT exemption. Whereas heritage bodies have got nowhere with the government, we suspect that things may change now more powerful voices are in on the act. And if they gain this for retrofitting then listed building owners surely cannot be refused their long-standing claim for VAT justice also.

Pedicabs Again



We have lost count of the number of times that good news has been announced on the pedicab regulation front only to later find the latest initiative to control these garish tricycles in one way or another gets frustrated. So it is with some reservation that we again report that there appears to finally be a breakthrough.

Last month in the King's Speech it was announced that "a bill will be introduced to deal with the scourge of unlicensed pedicabs in London." This leads us to hope that this time something may actually be done about them.

Cllr Adam Hug, leader of WCC responded by saying: "We welcome this latest pledge of action on pedicabs which is something Westminster City Council has campaigned on for years".

"Late-night blaring music from pedicabs has been a consistent irritant for Westminster residents and tourists have been fleeced by unregulated riders. However, this government has promised action before and not delivered so it is essential that this bill finally becomes law."

This is true, and our MP Nickie Aiken, who has been working with local people, community groups, residents' associations and her parliamentary colleagues has been calling for this for years. She has received many promises of action during this time - all of which have failed to materialise.

If, as it now appears, pedicabs are to be finally controlled, it is in no small part thanks to her efforts. We have to hope however that the regulations introduced to control them will be adequate and that TfL will ensure that they are properly enforced.

We now have of course a new problem on our crowded carriageways. That of e-bikes - which are essentially low-powered motorbikes masquerading as bicycles and benefiting from the complete lack of regulation that goes with the pedal-powered versions.

It is disappointing that in spite of lobbying, the regulation of e-bikes was not

included in King's speech.

There are now up to 2,000 e-bikes in Westminster at any given time and with the exception of the authorised hire bike operators, there are no regulations around their hire, operation, or parking. As a result, the streets are increasingly becoming a free-for-all. They put pedestrians in danger of injury and they torment drivers with their ever-constant disregard of traffic regulations.

In addition, the Lime hire versions are left strewn over Westminster's pavements. WCC have now established a network of around 300 parking bays through negotiations with e-bike operators to help manage the situation and are able to seize dangerously placed bikes.

The bays are trialled under an experimental traffic order. Officers are also investigating increasing coverage and increasing the density of existing bays.

WCC have issued 3000 warnings and 200 fines to date.

Crockford Club Casino Closing



Another piece of the West End's history bites the dust with the announcement of the closure of the Crockford Club. Britain's oldest casino is to close down after 195 years and is now up for sale for £70 million.

Like many of the grandest institutions in the West End, it started from very modest beginnings; it was opened by an enterprising fishmonger William Crockford in 1828.

He saw an opportunity to provide the wealthy members of society with a venue to enable the popular pastime of gambling and became a very wealthy man in the process.

When it first opened it was a private members club in St James Place. As its popularity grew the casino moved to Mayfair, bringing in the aristocracy and the rich from around the world.

The casino's closure comes after a difficult period following the pandemic. Reports suggest that the scrapping of VAT-free shopping for tourists post-Brexit, condemned as a shortsighted move by the New West End Company, could also be to blame, with fewer wealthy visitors now coming to London generally.

be to blame, with fewer wealthy visitors now coming to London generally.

Other casinos including the Ritz Club and The Clermont have also shut their doors in recent years.

The Marylebone Diary

HMV IS BACK ON OXFORD STREET: HMV first opened its doors on Oxford Street back in 1921. Now, a century later, they are celebrating the return of this iconic record shop. Pop over and check out the innovative twist on this classic institution. There are other high-profile stores returning to, or opening for the first time in Oxford Street

New Business Member



NEW GYMNASTICS CLASSES IN MARYLEBONE.

LAGAD will open their new Gymnastics Classes in Marylebone this January. Known for their dedication to high quality and fun gymnastics sessions for children, LAGAD is set to bring their expertise to the heart of London.

Their new weekend classes will be run at Abercorn School, 60 Paddington Street W1U, offering a convenient and central location for Marylebone families and their friends.

Suitable for children aged 3½ to 11 years. LAGAD's team of experienced and highly qualified coaches will focus on developing each child's gymnastics skills in a fun, safe and supportive environment. The curriculum will cover a range of gymnastics disciplines, ensuring a comprehensive learning experience for all abilities.

The opening of their Marylebone classes represents a significant step for LAGAD in their mission to promote top quality gymnastics coaching as a tool to support the physical development and wellbeing of all children. LAGAD places a strong emphasis on creating a positive and encouraging atmosphere for all.

Bookings can be made [here](#), and parents are encouraged to register their

children early to secure a spot. For more information, please visit lagad.co.uk or contact admin@lagad.co.uk

Announcements

Cafe-Concert at the Marylebone Theatre

Cafe-Concert is presenting another concert at the Marylebone Theatre on Tuesday 5th December at 19.30.

"Dresses, diamonds, pimples on noses, beautiful hair, marvellous outfits, the beauty of the devil himself, and the devil without the beauty. The last category is the least rare." - Frederic Chopin.

This time pianist Yekaterina Lebedeva and violinist Aysen Ulucan will take you on the musical journey of Victorian London, the London of Charles Dickens and Sherlock Holmes by presenting a concert set in a Victorian Street of the theatre play "Sherlock's Carol". An engaging talk, delivered by Yekaterina, will guide you through the intrigue and passions of the bygone era.

We are happy to offer discounted tickets to your members. The ticket not only includes the concert but also a festive mince pie! Go to the [link herewith a special discount](#) for MA members.

Cox and Power

[Cox and Power](#) have a part-time vacancy at their Chiltern Street boutique:

We are looking for someone to work with us a couple of days a week, front-of-house and admin support, initially in the lead-up to Christmas but potentially afterwards too. This would ideally suit a local person looking for a couple of days' work a week, maybe a parent with school-age children, as our day starts at 10am and we are essentially looking for someone to help us in the mornings, opening up, and over lunch breaks.

Contact [Rachel Sweeney](#). 020 7935 3530
10-12 Chiltern Street London W1U 7PX

206 Marylebone Road - Plans





Berkeley Estate Asset Management (BEAM), the long-term owners of 206 Marylebone Road are keen to hear your views on initial proposals to unlock the potential of this site whilst protecting its unique character.

They are holding two in-person events, the details of which are below:

Date: Thursday 7th December

Time: 15:00-19:00

Location: WeWork Marylebone, North West House, 119 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5PU

Date: Tuesday 12th December

Time: 16:00-19:30

Location: WeWork Marylebone, North West House, 119 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5PU

If you would like to discuss the proposals further, please email oharman@conciliocomms.com or phone 0800 193 9945.

The Hampstead Observatory



The Hampstead Observatory, one of the few observatories in London open to the public for viewing the night sky, is reopening to the public following repairs to the building. Just in time for the night skies to return.

The observatory's main telescope is also marking its centenary at the site, having been loaned to the observatory in 1923, and formally gifted to them in 1928. It's ideal for viewing the Moon, planets and double stars.

As long as the skies are clear, you might get to see Saturn's rings, Jupiter's cloud belts, the craters and mountains on the Moon and some of the brighter 'deep sky' objects – star clusters, nebulae and the odd galaxy. Volunteers at the observatory will set up the telescope on the night for the best things to look at.

Weather forecasts permitting, the observatory will be open on Friday and Saturday evenings, and they will release tickets on Thursday mornings if they will be open that coming weekend.

The entrance to the observatory is on Hampstead Grove, next to the Whitestone Pond, about a 10-minute walk from Hampstead tube station on the Northern line.

Tickets are free - with cash donations on the night appreciated - and will be available usually on a Thursday morning from here.

More details about the Hampstead Scientific Society, which owns the observatory, are [here](#).

Get Protected-Get Vaccinated

Flu can be very dangerous, particularly for small children and many are admitted to hospital every year. If your child is age 2 or 3, call your GP to book the flu vaccine. If they are older, they can get the vaccine at school.

The children's nasal spray flu vaccine is safe and effective. It is offered every year to children to help protect them.

Flu is caused by the influenza virus. It can be a very unpleasant illness for children. It can also lead to serious problems, such as bronchitis and pneumonia.

Children can catch and spread flu easily. Vaccinating them also protects others who are vulnerable, such as babies and older people. Keep your children [protected](#)

New Horizons

Europe's highest free public viewing gallery now open to visit.

Tickets are free — yes, free — and can be booked here at 10am each day.

The ticket will include entry to the building and up to the Horizon 22 Viewing Gallery and then the journey back down and out of the building.

22 Horizon is on Bishopsgate in the City of London, close to Leadenhall Market and roughly equidistant from Bank, Aldgate and Monument tube stations, as well as Liverpool Street and Fenchurch Street mainline stations.

Visiting Horizon 22 is free and all you have to do is to go to our website to secure your tickets We'll be open weekdays from 10am to 6pm, Saturday 10am-5pm and Sunday 10am-4pm.

[Link to Horizon 22's website](#)

Christmas Carols - Hinde Street

Manchester Square Garden Carol Event

Carol Event

Manchester Square Gardens

Wednesday 13 December 4.30 – 7.30pm

A special evening of carols all for the benefit of UK dementia charities.

We will be joined by the incredible Regents Community Brass band in a festive

We will be joined by the incredible Regents Community Brass band, in a festive marquee, for carols, a tombola with fantastic prizes, mince pies, mulled wine, hot chocolate and plenty of Christmas treats!

Entry is free for all, with donations encouraged and welcomed throughout the night.

Carols at St John's Church

St John's Church, Hyde Park, W2 2QD
Saturday 9 December at 7.30 (doors open 7 pm)

A mesmerising evening of choral & classical music at St John's Church Classical Christmas Concert with enchanting melodies and festive cheer.

The chance to immerse yourself in the magical ambiance as this bunch of talented singers take to the stage to perform timeless Christmas classics. Programme includes the harmonious sounds of the choir and Soprano Soloist Emily Burnett (Ex-Choral Scholar at our local St John's Hyde Park Crescent and who with her partner Sophie as Bella Voci was a semi-finalist on ITV's The Voice in 2018) as they create an atmosphere that captures the true essence of Christmas. Whether you're a fan of classical music or simply looking to embrace the joyous festive season, this concert is not to be missed. Further information: <https://christmasatstjohns.eventbrite.co.uk>



Open-Minded - Inclusive & Affirming - Justice-Seeking

www.hindestreet.org.uk / Twitter / Instagram / Facebook

Adult Literacy Trust

The Adult Literacy Trust is looking for volunteers to help adults in Westminster learn to read.

When adults improve their reading skills it can have profound and lasting benefits on their ability to navigate everyday tasks, manage their personal finances, find and retain decent-paying jobs, read to their children, and much more.

In partnership with local further education colleges, we provide Volunteer Reading Coaches who work with individuals to practice their reading skills and build their confidence – with feedback, support and encouragement.

If this sounds like something you'd be interested in, you can find out more about our current recruitment drive via our [website](#).

You can also get in touch directly with us at volunteers@alt.org.uk. No prior teaching experience or qualification is needed – we provide all the training and induction you'll need.

Association Events

Forthcoming events

THE WALLACE COLLECTION AFTERNOON TEA Few Places Remaining
Wednesday 13th December at 2.30pm The Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, W1U 3BN

Join us for the annual pre-Christmas afternoon tea in the lovely light filled courtyard surroundings of The Wallace Collection restaurant. The tea will include a glass of Brut champagne and this year will be at the cost of £49.50 per person, including service. Places must be booked and we will be taking advance payment. All members are welcome both residential and business and to book your places please email lois.german@marylebone.org or telephone 0207 487 2706.

ANNUAL NEW YEAR DRINKS PARTY

Thursday 18th January 2023 at 7pm
The Oriental Club, Stratford House, 11 Stratford Place, W1C 1ES

We are delighted once again to have our annual wine and canapés party in the elegant atmosphere of the Library at The Oriental Club. This Grade 1 listed private members club is one of the most impressive surviving examples of Georgian architecture in this part of London. All residential and business members are welcome with the opportunity to meet old friends and new, along

with members of the Committee. We can look forward to a most enjoyable evening.

To reserve your place please email lois.german@marylebone.org or telephone 0207 487 2706. The cost this year will be £40 per head and payment details will be provided on booking. Please do book early as this event was well oversubscribed in January 2022 and January 2023.

Regular Events

BOOK CLUB

Monday 4th December at 6.30 pm

The King's Head, Westmoreland Street, W1G 8PJ

December's book: Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus.

January's book: Traitor King, the Scandalous Exile of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor by Andrew Lownie

Book Club meets on the first Monday of each month, upstairs at The King's Head pub in Westmoreland Street but please note, December 4th – our Book Club Christmas Party – will be at a different location - contact Liz (see below) for details. All book choices are available in paperback and on e-readers. For further details – and anyone interested in joining us - please contact Liz Queenan (liz.queenan@marylebone.org) or tel: 020 7486 3709.

PUB EVENING

Monday 11th December at 6.30pm

The Larrik, 32 Crawford Place, London, W1H 5NN

Continuing with our regular bi-monthly pub evenings at this cosy, warm and welcoming gastro pub, with great food, wines, beers and cocktails. Everybody is welcome so do come along whether you are a regular or new to our pub evenings, where you will be greeted by our hostess for the evening Ann Marie Johnson.

SCRABBLE CLUB

Tuesday 12th December from 5.00 pm

The Duke of Wellington, 94a Crawford Street, London W1H 2HQ

Players normally meet in the private dining-room at The Duke of Wellington pub in Crawford Street on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, from 5 until 7, with Scrabble sets and dictionaries provided – and all levels of players are very welcome.

PLEASE NOTE Scrabble on 12th December will be at a different location, contact Rosemary Forgan for details and there will be NO SCRABBLE on December 26th which is of course Boxing Day.

First Scrabble Club date in the New Year: Tuesday 9th January 2024. Anyone interested in joining and/or wanting further information should contact rosemary.forgan@marylebone.org or 020 7916 9353.