



# Marylebone Association

Newsletter February 2022

## Association January Party



For the first time in two long years, the residents and workers of Marylebone put on their glad rags to celebrate at the MA Annual Drinks Party. On January 27th some 60 members of the Marylebone Association gathered at the Oriental Club in Stratford Place – and what a gathering it was.

In the beautiful Georgian surroundings of Stratford House the drinks flowed freely, the delicious canapés just kept on coming and everyone seemed to catch the atmosphere after so many months – or is it years – of not being able to live the very social lifestyle we normally enjoy here in Marylebone.

Friends, old and new, mingled happily with our local Westminster Councillors – and it was good to be reminded just how hard they work on our behalf, even if we don't always agree with everything they do! Our Chairman, Michael Bolt, welcomed everyone to our first major social function since January 2020 and introduced our special guest, local MP, Nickie Aiken. Nickie, in a wide-ranging address, reminded us there are important storms on the horizon, beyond the Westminster bubble – from Ukraine to the cost of living. She also updated us on various rather more local issues she is involved with, such as her Pedicabs Bill (see article below) and the repealing of the Vagrancy Act.

A good time was had by all – thanks in no small part to Lois and Rosemary on our dedicated social team, and the ever attentive staff at the Oriental Club. We would like to convey a big thank you to them and everyone who came along and helped the party go with such a swing.

# Our MP Report - Pedicabs



Nicky Aiken MP addressing Association members at the January Party

*We are pleased to print the following article sent to us by our Member of Parliament.*

I'd like to start by thanking all of you for your incredible support over the past 24 months as I have developed legislation to ensure the safety of Pedicabs. Many of you across the Marylebone Association have raised concerns and experiences, and I am listening to you.

My Pedicabs (London) Bill, currently working its way through Parliament, would set out a licensing regime managed by Transport for London and work similarly to the licensing regime we have for black cabs and private hire vehicles.

Thanks to all of your messages, I have been armed with your experiences of Pedicabs which I have taken directly to colleagues on this issue. I am also pleased to have received the Government's support for my legislation.

In January, I met with Sir Christopher Chope MP, who previously objected to my Bill, Transport for London and the Mayor's Walking and Cycling Commissioner, Will Norman. It was good to explain further to Sir Christopher how TfL would manage the scheme, and reassure him that my response to legislate Pedicabs is proportionate and fair.

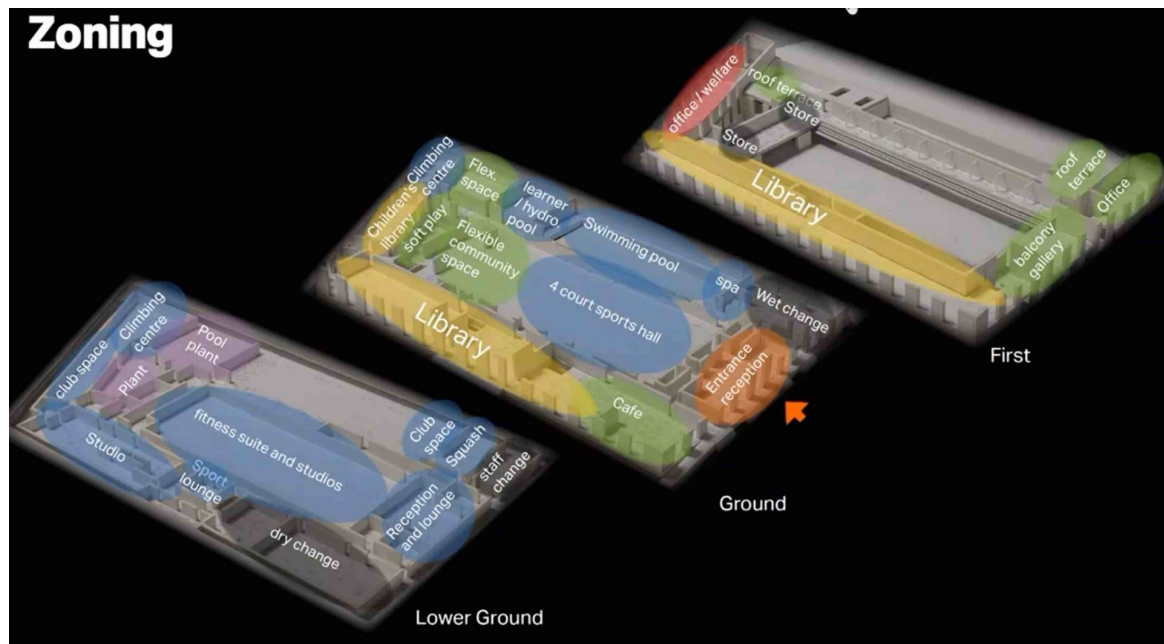
It is important to say, my legislation is not about banning Pedicabs, but instead ensuring they are safe for everyone who uses them. Currently, we have no idea who the drivers are, whether the vehicles they are using are safe, and I am incredibly worried that on recent joint operations between Westminster City Council and the Metropolitan Police, they found drivers wanted for sexual offences. We must ensure the drivers are checked and safe.

I am continuing to push my legislation and work with colleagues to raise your voices directly in Parliament, and I hope to have good news on Pedicabs soon. If you haven't already, there's still time to back my campaign at [nickie.news/Pedicabs](http://nickie.news/Pedicabs).

If I can help with any issue, please do send me an email to [nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk) and keep up to date on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @TwoCitiesNickie

Nickie Aiken MP

# Seymour Centre Project



Westminster Council shared some very exciting design ideas for the new Marylebone Library and complete refurbishments of the Seymour Leisure Centre. You can watch the presentation [here](#) and find out all the information about the project. The MA is delighted with the increased and improved library facilities that are planned, and we are impressed with how the concepts have evolved.

It may have taken sometime, but credit to WCC for seizing this once in a generation opportunity for Marylebone community. Watch this space!

## Cycling in Westminster

The Highway Code has just been updated to advise that motorists give greater priority to cyclists on the road, and cyclists are advised in turn to pay more consideration to pedestrians, so we thought it was a good time to review where we have presently got to with cycling in Westminster.

The Council published a cycling strategy back in November 2014, this was in response to the Mayor of London, one Boris Johnson's 'Vision for Cycling' published in March 2013.

WCC's vision was to make Westminster a national leader in cycling provision, making it safer and more attractive for a greater number of people from all backgrounds to cycle more frequently. Given the pollution levels in central London it was felt essential to get more people out walking and cycling for short journeys.

Westminster's strategy was very comprehensive and covered all sorts of things from improving parking provision, cycle training for all ages and HGV awareness of cyclists and essential equipment on board to reduce accidents. And Westminster has achieved a great deal since 2014. But times have changed – particularly with the Covid crises – and it is time for further evaluation.

Since Covid, Westminster and TfL have used Experimental Traffic Orders to introduce bike lanes without consultation. Probably the most notorious of these is the one in Park Lane which turned a 4 lane highway into one lane for cars in order to accommodate a two way lane for cycles. The result has been gridlock from Hyde Park Corner to Marble Arch and a cycle lane going both ways which is barely used as there is a much more pleasant and indeed better integrated one running parallel in the Park. To the north of our area in Euston Road is another example of an unused cycle lane that continues to snarl up traffic. Many of these lanes were introduced as emergency measures because of Covid and they now need urgent re-examination. One such in Marylebone is in Portland Place which has proved most unpopular with residents as it has greatly increased congestion, and therefore pollution.

Having encouraged people to take to two wheels it has to be said that the parking provision is not adequate and we need more secure parking in Marylebone. However, the few hangers that the Council have so far provided are firstly oversubscribed and secondly far too ugly for a conservation area with many examples of historic Georgian houses. It should not be too hard to come up with a more attractive design for the hangers. WCC should also be encouraging NCPs to convert space into secure cycle parking both for visitors to the area but also residents who don't have room to store their bikes. Bike theft is a serious issue, but not high on the Police to do list.

Cyclists are not always popular especially when they cycle on the pavements. But E-Scooter riders are even more disliked! One problem seems to be that many of those we see out and about are illegal even though they are sold openly in the shops. The Council introduced official private hire scooters in various locations in the Borough in August 2021 on a trial basis. Only these scooters are officially allowed. The privately owned ones are illegal on the highways or pavements but the police do little to combat this and the Council allows them to be sold openly.

E-Bikes are also part of the mix and have a part to play but can only be used as long as they meet Electric Assisted Pedal Assist (EAPC) rules set by the DVLA. This means that the assisted motor cuts out at 15.5 mph. Bikes that do not meet their requirements are classified as a motorised vehicle and must be taxed and insured when used on the public highway. We wonder just how many of the Deliveroo type E-bikes meet these requirements and who monitors or enforces their use?

The Council has come a long way since 2014 in helping to encourage more cyclists on the roads. But they cannot sit back on their laurels and think that the job is done. Nor can they rely on Emergency Traffic Orders to create cycle lanes without adequate local consultation. Somehow, we need to find solutions to these problems that will satisfy all those using our roads and pavements whether we are in a car, on a bicycle or on foot.

The Council and TfL need to take into account the displacement of traffic which often increases congestion and pollution in areas where people live when a cycle lane is created. When planning traffic flows they need to consider all the road users. Sometimes a cycle lane is not needed, but there needs to be enough room for a bicycle to get past. Narrowing roads like Oxford Street and Bond Street was a missed opportunity for cyclists. It simply does not leave enough room for a bike to be safely passed – particularly with the new extra wide taxis!

In addition WCC needs to remember that not everyone can cycle – some may be too young, too old, too scared or never learned how to in the first place. Residents with cars need to be able to get out of the City occasionally. When creating space for cyclists, consultation and enforcement are important elements of the process to find a solution.

The planners need to get out and look at the space and not just model it on a computer. Residents also need to have confidence in the system of consultation - so that if a scheme proves to be a mistake, it can be reversed.

# Gas Lighting Cull Paused

Some good news! Following our previous article on the insensitive plans to upgrade Westminster's historic gas lights, we are pleased to be able now to report that these are being paused while the City Council talks to residents and local groups.

There are 305 gas lamps across the City, some dating back to the launch of street lighting in the early 19th century. Servicing and finding spare parts for the antique lamps has proved increasingly difficult, and the City Council has to date replaced 30 with replica look-alike LED lamps while maintaining the heritage lamp posts.

The Council is now going to consult local residents, conservation groups and businesses on how further upgrades should proceed. No more working gas lamps will be removed while this consultation - expected to take until the end of this year - has been completed.

Cllr Rachael Robathan, leader of Westminster City Council, said:

"We all recognise the value these historic gas lamps bring to our City. They are part of our heritage and why people love visiting and living here.

"While these lamps are beautiful and atmospheric, 200-year-old fittings are increasingly difficult to maintain as spare parts are difficult to come by. Street lamps have to do the basic job of casting enough light so that people -especially women - feel safe at night. When gas lights don't work because of lengthy repair times, that creates a safety issue.

"It is right to take the time now to talk to local people and conservation groups to ensure that where new electric lights go in, they are as faithful to the original as possible. That's why we are working with organisations like Historic England.

"We all want to preserve these beautiful heritage lamps for the future, but in order to do that we need to make sure they can continue to operate going forward."

# Manchester Square heading for Pedestrianisation

Following a recent consultation, the Council has signed off a report to pedestrianise the northern part of Manchester Square. According to the consultation, there were 16 representations received against the proposal. However, the Marylebone Association itself received many more complaints about it than this, perhaps our members exhausted themselves writing to us. This however hardly does much to help disperse the general cynicism around Westminster consultations.

Westminster Council say that this part of the Oxford Street District improvements will provide a more connected cycling route and a green space for all to enjoy which we are desperately short of in Marylebone. We say that it is totally unnecessary, it is already quiet enough and will deface one of the few intact 18th-century squares that we have left. Further, the road restrictions are counterproductive; they will look unsightly and will push traffic into other streets.

The project is supported by the Portman Estate, the Baker Street Quarter and the Wallace Collection and is now going to the design stage.

## "Devastating" Mound Deconstructed



The Council began removing the Mound this month and we are sure no one will be sorry to see it go, least of all Westminster Council, to whom it is a monument reminding all of the folly in approving it in the first place. WCC have attempted to justify it on the basis it gained 250,000 visitors over the past 6 months. However, considering Oxford Street gets 600,000 visitors a day this is hardly impressive. Amongst other accolades, it has gained first place in the Daily Mail's list of white elephants of 2021.

It will apparently take 4 months to demolish it, which is longer than it took to build in the first place

Ratepayers will also be pleased to see the back of it, considering that on top of the construction costs of over 6 million, it was costing £150,000 a month to keep open. No money was recouped as plans to charge visitors for access to the Mound were abandoned following national, international and local media coverage which dubbed the project 'London's Worst Tourist Attraction'.

It has now been revealed that the Council Officer responsible for this was Westminster Council's highest-paid employee at £220,000 a year, out-earning even the Chief Executive.

The Oxford Street District Programme Director resigned from the Council in the Autumn of 2021 after the true costs of the scheme began to become apparent, triggering also the resignation of the Council's Deputy Leader.

In October 2021, a Council internal investigation of the Mound project described the soaring costs of the scheme as "devastating" and "avoidable". The report by the Council's Chief Executive said there were "clear and repeated warnings" about the project being over-budget.

# Covid Shortfall

Westminster's Budget Task Group met this week and released their Second Revenue Report, outlining the medium-term financial plan for the borough as recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic continues. One of the key takeaways is that there is a negative budget variance of £27m between now and pre-pandemic. Not the time to be spending money unnecessarily then!

## Westminster Wants Rates Reform

Westminster Council are calling for a shakeup in taxation to adjust to the surge in online sales and to provide help in High Street. The City of Westminster Leader, Rachel Robotham has called for an "online sales tax which could be used to enable targeted relief for bricks and mortar businesses and allow them to compete on a level playing field with internet retailers".

Central London, perhaps unsurprisingly, has been the hardest-hit area in the whole of the UK over the past two year period of the pandemic – and by some margin. With its international connections, tourism office-based economy and concentration of hospitality businesses, the centre of the capital is doing particularly badly. Conversely, Scotland and Wales did better than almost anywhere else in the UK.

New problems may be emerging if changes to working patterns stick, post-pandemic. The Financial Times reports that the capital total sales since March 2020 were down 26% on levels one would have expected based on pre-pandemic levels. But zone one, the commercial and tourist centre has suffered a 52% drop in sales. The City of London within that zone has been the hardest hit local authority - since March 2020 spending in the square mile has fallen by a massive 69%. This is driven by localisation, particularly working from home. In comparison sales in Zone four in the suburbs were down by just 9.4%.

Andrew Carter, chief executive of the Centre for Cities think tank says, "business support during the pandemic was more effective at shielding firms and less prosperous places from the pandemic than those in our biggest and most economically important city centres."

## Tacky Oxford Street





Westminster Council are beginning to listen to the many voices raised against the outbreak of cheap and shoddy shops spreading like a rash across Oxford Street. Last month WCC Leader, Cllr Rachael Robathan, took a trip down Oxford Street to see for herself the problems with the streets' burgeoning "candy stores" and other dubious outlets. She said they "knew there were real problems on Oxford street, pockets of issues around candy stores, anti-social behaviour, and all sorts of other issues".

Now Westminster seeks to bring together the various stakeholders in the area: TfL, Landowners, BIDs, together with council officers, to address these issues and tackle the problems emerging.

We look forward to hearing just how they are going to do this, for it is not just the unsightliness and tackiness of these shops that is offensive, but also the criminal activity that goes with them, such as the selling of counterfeit goods.

## Strip Club for Vere Street?

As part of the regeneration of the Oxford Street district, one of the things we really do not want to see in this part of Marylebone is a strip club. Yet that is what is being planned next to St Peters Church on Vere Street, just yards away from Oxford Street itself.

Clarmans Clubs have applied for a sex entertainment licence to run until 5.00 in the morning involving full nudity striptease in the basement, ground and mezzanine of the former Lebanese restaurant.

The Association having helped to see off a similar application on Duke street the other year is taking up the cudgels again, again backed by the might of the New West End Company who's director Jace Tyrell says: "The site is in the vicinity of a number of key West End iconic stores, a new hotel, the UK headquarters of a major real estate agency and a local church. The area attracts visitors of all ages from all around the world. We believe that a sex entertainment venue would detract from this and other surrounding businesses."

"In addition, we are concerned about late-night entertainment in an area with significant residential premises. New West End Company and its members are always aware of the need to be sensitive to concerns of residents and, from many years' experience, we do not believe that a sex entertainment venue would be appreciated in this area".

"We believe that sex related premises should be concentrated in areas that are traditionally known for such uses. We do not believe that new areas should be established for sex-related businesses."

We of course agree with and support all the above sentiments.

# West End Investment back to pre-Covid levels

Concilio reported that a flurry of transactions in December 2021 has pushed West End investments back to pre-Covid levels, with £1.53 billion worth of activity (26% of the annual volume) taking place last month - including seven £100 million plus transactions. This has pushed the 2021 turnover above not only that of 2020, but also 11% above the 2019 total, illustrating a powerful resurgence in the West End office market.

The largest transaction to take place in December was ARA Dunedin Asset Management's long leasehold acquisition of 5 Marble Arch Place from Almacantar for £280m. You can read the full report [here](#).

## Call for Sites

In January, WCC launched the Call for Sites to gather information on land with development potential that could then be allocated through the Council's emerging Site Allocations Plan (SAP). The Call will run until 31st May 2022, during which the Council is encouraging landowners, developers and individuals to submit details of sites within Westminster that may be suitable for redevelopment.

After the Call for Sites process, the council will look to adopt the SAP which will form part of the Council's Development Plan, to be used alongside the City Plan, Neighbourhood Plans and other Supplementary Planning Documents. More information on the emerging Site Allocations Plan and guidance on how to respond to the Call for Sites are available on the council's website [here](#).

## House of Fraser





### *How the new House of Fraser building could look after re-development / Public Properties Establishment*

An application at 318 Oxford Street (formerly House of Fraser) for a 100 million facelift which had received a resolution to grant planning consent from Westminster City Council has been brought back to Committee. Clarification was sought relating the extent of public realm improvements the applicant undertaking as part of the Section 106 agreement and the timing triggers of works.

The building was built in 1937 and was originally occupied by department store DH Evans. The large-scale development will see the building given an extensive refurbishment and convert its upper floors into office space and a top floor restaurant with 360-degree views of the surrounding area.

Representations were made on behalf of the applicant arguing that what was being proposed represented a significant investment to improve the Oxford Street District. Cllr Robert Rigby stated he was of the view that the proposals were still significant and would make a massive difference, adding that flexibility was key. While some members noted disappointment that not more public realm improvements would be delivered, they approved the application unanimously.

## Voting by post

Remember that our council elections are coming along shortly in May and it is much easier, quicker and safer to vote by post. You can use this [form](#) to apply for a postal vote.

You can email your completed form to [electoralservices@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:electoralservices@westminster.gov.uk) or post it to Electoral Services, Westminster City Council, 14th Floor City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

## New Years Honours

The Manager of North Paddington Food Bank, James Quayle, has been named in the New Year's Honours list, for services to Westminster.

A crucial part of that response was support from local businesses and the resources and connectivity that they could offer, including Baker Street Quarter, Paddington Partnerships, NWECC, British Land, Portman Estate and Howard de Walden. It all made an enormous difference to what was achieved.

James' nomination was supported by Cllr Rachael Robathan and Karen Buck MP, among many others.

## The Marylebone Diary

It has been a quiet start to the year in Marylebone in terms of new business ventures and pop ups - it seems like everyone spent the first half of the month with Covid. The annual migration out of Marylebone lasted longer than usual. Despite the fact there are still 'to let' signs, we see that they have now been replaced with 'under offer' which is very positive news.

This month's Interview: Cristina Rodriguez owner of 94YS Marylebone York Street. Cristin opened in October 2019, just before the first Covid lockdown see [interview](#).

Soho Poly: The Soho Poly had a drop-in session last week. It is a friendly theatre situated on Riding House Street, bringing arts and culture into the ordinary daily life providing nourishment and enrichment at lunchtime and at other times during the day to suit everyone. Jordan Scammel, Dr Matt Morison and Guy Osborne and their team are restoring London's iconic alternative theatre venue rediscovered in the basement. From 1972 to 1990 the Soho Poly was London's most important alternative theatre venue. Timberlake Wertenbaker and Bob Hoskins were just some of the playwrights and actors that started there.

Barber King: has just opened on Baker Street, owner Izmir Turkey started cutting hair at eight and sees clients like Cristiano Ronaldo. His ethos is nobody's life is perfect but your hair can be!

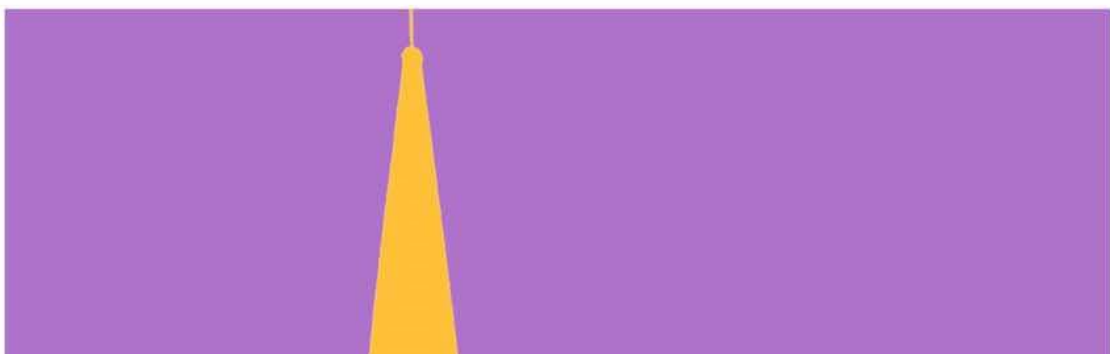
Homelessness: Westminster provides millions of funding each year to support any and every rough sleeper who wants to move into fixed accommodation alongside outreach workers to and to help those with complex needs such as drug or alcohol dependency. But some cases are harder to deal with than others. Cllrs Glanz and Barnes worked with Westminster officers and partner organisations to help one young person who had pitched their tent on Regent Street! Thankfully, after efforts over two weeks, they were persuaded to take up an accommodation place and additional help and officers cleared the site and rubbish the same day.

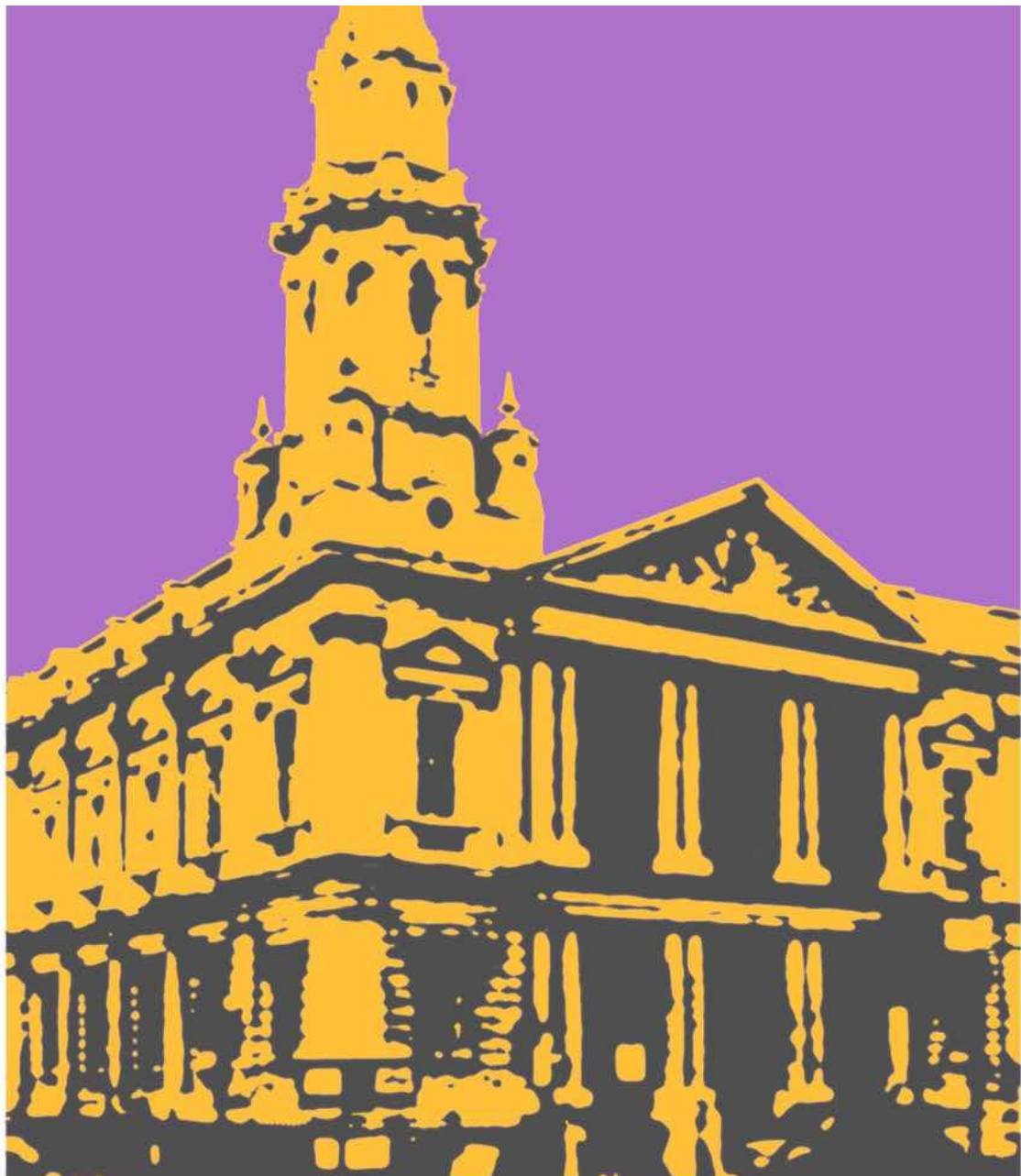
Fitzrovia Chapel: an intimate and intriguing exhibition dedicated to the life of Leigh Bowery. The Middlesex Hospital where he died held one of the few dedicated AIDS wards in London and within its grounds the chapel still stands.

Fair Shot café: opened on South Molton Street, a social enterprise café celebrating diversity and offering training and employment to young adults with learning disabilities.

# Announcements

## Hinde Street Methodist Church





Hinde Street Methodist Church is in the heart of Marylebone and has been standing at the corner of Hinde Street and Thayer Street since the 1880s.

Now the premises have been extensively refurbished to provide extensive facilities for conferences, meetings and other activities. A lift gives disabled access from the street to the Church and Basement levels - where accessible toilet facilities are available.

The main church space itself provides flexible accommodation for large meetings, performances and rehearsals of orchestral and choral works. The church has a gallery around three sides. It can be cleared of all furniture if required. The capacity of the main floor of the church is 130, increasing to 200 if additional chairs are hired.

As well as the main church there are various meeting rooms that can be rented out by the hour. There is a further room with a capacity of 100 in the basement hall, as well as two smaller meeting rooms which seat 20 and 30, all with lift access from street level and accessible WCs. There are further rooms at first-floor level for 14 to 17 people, but these have no disabled access.

The rate for all spaces are very reasonable so, for further information, including prices, please contact the church office on: [office@hindestreet.org.uk](mailto:office@hindestreet.org.uk)

# The Marylebone Summer Festival

The Howard de Walden Estate organises this lovely annual event, formerly the Summer Fayre, which provides a wonderful opportunity for new and small businesses to take a stall and spread the word about their products or services. Any business members who would like to consider participating with a stall at The Sunday Street Party should email [events@hdwe.co.uk](mailto:events@hdwe.co.uk) for more information.

Date: Sunday 19th June 2022

## Association Events

All the Association Events listed below are in accordance with Government rules and recommendations regarding Covid. If anything changes we will alert all those who have booked or signed up for events – and where appropriate provide full refunds. But fingers crossed that won't need to happen.

### **COFFEE MORNING**

Wednesday 16th February 2022 at 10am.  
Howard de Walden Estates Office,  
23 Queen Anne Street, London, W1G 9DL

The Howard de Walden Estates have kindly offered to host our February Coffee Morning (in the hub area on the top floor) of their newly renovated headquarters, home to Howard de Walden since the late 19th Century. Come and enjoy coffee, tea and pastries. Many of us in Marylebone are involved in some way or another with the Howard de Walden estate so this should be an interesting opportunity to meet with senior staff and learn more about what they do.

Places need to be booked on or before February 9th – to allow for catering – so to reserve a place please email Lois German on: [lois.german@marylebone.org](mailto:lois.german@marylebone.org) or telephone 0207 487 2706.

### **REGULAR ASSOCIATION EVENTS**

#### **BOOK CLUB**

Wednesday 2 February 2022 at 6.30 pm  
The King's Head, 13 Westmoreland Street, London W1G 8PJ

Members are meeting up again 'for real' upstairs at The King's Head pub in Westmoreland Street. Anyone who is interested in joining in should contact Liz Queenan. Meetings have changed to the first WEDNESDAY of each month but still commence at 6.30. This month's choice is The Great Swindle by Pierre Lemaitre. All books read are available on paper and on e-readers. For more information contact Liz Queenan ([liz.queenan@marylebone.org](mailto:liz.queenan@marylebone.org)) or tel: 020 7486 3709.

#### **PUB EVENING**

Monday 14th February at 6.30 pm  
The Larrik, 32 Crawford Place, W1H 5NN

Continuing with our regular bi-monthly pub evenings at this cosy, warm and welcoming gastropub with great food, wines and beers. 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 8 and 22 February 2022 at 5.00 pm

The Duke of Wellington, 54a Crawford Street, London W1H 2HQ

The Scrabble Club normally meets 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 very welcome. Anyone interested in joining and/or wanting further information should contact: [rosemary.forgan@marylebone.org](mailto:rosemary.forgan@marylebone.org) or 0788 789 1977.

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