



# Marylebone Association

Newsletter August 2021

Dear Tim,

## Mound gets Internationally Unfavourable Response



*'Londoners Were Promised a Hill With a View. They Got a Pile of Scaffolding'*  
- The New York Times

*'To call the Marble Arch Mound a 'folly' is an insult to Britain's many great follies'* - The Telegraph

*'Marble Arch Mound is SHUT after two days amid storm of criticism'* - Daily Mail

*'New £2m tourist attraction in London branded 'useless pile of rubbish' as first visitors are offered refunds' - Manchester Evening News*

It is fair to say that the eventual, and delayed, opening - and the more rapid re-closing- of the Marble Arch Mound has attracted a great deal of publicity over the last week. However, it is hardly the sort of publicity that Westminster Council was hoping for. In fact, the barrage of criticism, both from the public and press, like the weather, has rained down relentlessly since then, mainly focused over the cost and the point of it.

Indeed, for those not familiar with our council's track record in pointless yet expensive greening, there is a general air of mystification as to why the thing is there in the first place - and just what its purpose is. Westminster Council has achieved the seemingly impossible task of attracting a level of national and indeed international criticism for this local piece of folly.

Whilst the designs for the structure show an abundance of lush greenery and stunning views, the reality has proved, so far, somewhat different. The views from the top are certainly uninspiring - Hyde Park, as we predicted back in our March Newsletter, is almost entirely obscured by trees, and the website also wrongly boasts of views down most of Oxford Street, which are in reality, clearly absent.

There are some defenders - the Marble Arch BID's chief executive Kay Buxton had previously welcomed the hill as a "clarion call to the recovery of London's hospitality and leisure sector". So far the clarion call has been more like a bugle call - to the press hounds sniffing blood, and scenting the chance to get on the trail of an epic failure.

The question now has to be asked about another of Westminster's grandiose and vastly more expensive schemes which we have long opposed but is now in the process of being inflicted on us, although again, totally unwanted - the Oxford Circus Piazzas. What confidence can we have in a council capable of producing one monumental folly that it is not about to embark on another even bigger one- the closure of Oxford Street for the sake of a pedestrianised busking area around Oxford Circus. (See last month's article for full details).

We do not doubt that WCC embark on these ventures in the sincere belief they are in some way making things better (see the Deputy Leader's article below), but we hold the equally sincere belief that they are bound to result in damage.

We are assured that closing Oxford Circus and diverting the traffic through our area instead will be absolutely fine, but this seems highly improbable - and given their attempts to date, what faith can we really have in their judgement and assurances to the contrary?

## Piazzas & Mounds - The View from Westminster

*We are pleased to be able to publish in full below an article on the issues the Council is facing post Covid, and the measures they are taking to deal with it, sent to us from the Cabinet Member responsible for the Oxford Street District project:*

“Last month we saw the lifting of the remaining Covid restrictions, a welcome step towards normality for those Westminster businesses and venues subject to months of lockdown. Residents and traders alike look forward to seeing their City restored. So, what is the council doing about it?

First let me sketch the scale of the problem. While the streets are clearly busier and traffic is returning, footfall figures in Westminster are low. The number of people visiting shops and recreation areas is down by a third compared to 12 per cent in the rest of the country. In the West End, footfall is down by more than half compared to pre-pandemic levels. Turn to Oxford Street West (towards Marble Arch), and the picture is bleaker yet with footfall down by nearly two thirds. The picture is compounded by the fact the market for international tourism went off a cliff during lockdown with nine out of ten of foreign visitors staying away. The tourists are returning, but they are still thin on the ground - and they are vital to our economy.

Our experience is that visitors enjoy themselves and are prepared to spend when they visit central London - but they need to feel there is a strong reason for doing so.

There are a number of innovative and imaginary things the council is doing to restore that appetite. We are creating a new look for Oxford Street, the nation's high street. This involves establishing two pedestrian-friendly piazzas on either side of Oxford Circus, and which is part of the ongoing £150m redevelopment of the overall Oxford Street District. There will also be significant improvements to public spaces, as well as new greenery and seating. This makes the area more friendly to walk around and helps to improve air quality. It also creates the space that is needed for when Crossrail completes and the very significant numbers of additional people that will bring around Oxford Circus because of this.

We are delivering the Oxford Circus work in stages, underpinned by a six month public consultation. This is achieved by utilising an Experimental Traffic Order to allow changes to Oxford Circus, and the required enabling works across a wider area, for the piazzas to open in November 2021. This gives us the flexibility to allow us to amend, develop or stop our plans through a constant dialogue and by looking at what effect the works have.

One way we have tried to support jobs in Westminster during lockdown is through the al fresco dining scheme, with a number of venues in Marylebone benefiting. One of the reasons the council introduced al fresco dining was to avert the risk of our shopping streets being hollowed out, and to protect the 80,000 jobs the hospitality industry generates in Westminster.

We are grateful that local people - who live around the new pop-up dining areas - understood that argument and supported us. The council has issued hundreds of temporary al fresco licences for a scheme welcomed by the hospitality industry and copied across the country. However, we have made it clear that all the temporary al fresco schemes will end on Sept 30th, and any permanent schemes will only happen if they are supported by the majority of residents in that area.

Westminster didn't stop being a fantastic global attraction in March last year when the Prime Minister ordered the first lockdown. We need to proclaim that message again, and to remind everyone of the unique mix of attractions - cultural institutions, restaurants, shops, galleries - that the City offers. Next month we will launch a new marketing campaign called *Westminster Reveals*, which will promote all the amazing things visitors can do in a visit. One highlight will be September's *Inside Out* arts festival, which, in partnership with London's famous venues, will put free art and performances on the street for the public to enjoy. There will also be a light exhibition and of course the welcome return of *West End LIVE* – that annual 48-hour taster of top musicals that draws tens of thousands to Trafalgar Square.

In terms of The Marble Arch Mound, we have to be clear that such was our desire to bring people back to the area that we made a mistake and opened this too early for which I apologise. I am absolutely convinced this is going to be a popular attraction that draws visitors who then go on to other parts of Westminster and the West End. Our analysis of traffic flows also suggests the Mound is not going to add to congestion or parking issues. We are making the Mound free for everyone to climb during August prior to reopening it when we have sorted out the outstanding issues.

There needs to be a compelling reason not to undertake a campaign like *Westminster Reveals*. Nobody in Westminster – the local authority, business improvement districts, theatres or retailers – can sit around and wait for the West End to miraculously self-heal. We need our visitors and commuters back while we look after the City's 260,000 residents.

At City Hall our challenge is to retain the distinctive character of areas like Marylebone while also planning ahead to what Westminster will look like in five, ten- or 20-years' time. The future of our high streets is without question one where retailers operate next to pop-up businesses, cultural attractions and with a mix of residential properties.

Earlier this year Westminster City Council adopted the new priority of creating a thriving economy. This will help us to create the right environment so local people have a chance of working in Westminster, enjoying our open spaces and a chance of living here.

We do not have the luxury of waiting for some post-pandemic era of calm to introduce innovative new ideas to bring back the crowd. I want to work with the Marylebone Association to help us do that.”

*Cllr Melvyn Caplan, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for City Management*

## Nicky Aikin MP meets with the Marylebone Association





We were delighted to be able to entertain our local MP, Nicky Aiken, with coffee and cakes in a covid-safe outside environment in a quiet Marylebone mews last week. For an hour she listened to us run through a list of the various issues and was keen to hear about current concerns. Our chairman, Michael Bolt, started the discussion with reference to the plans to pedestrianise Oxford Circus, something that Nickie had been closely associated with when Leader of Westminster County Council.

Full pedestrianisation of Oxford Street was shelved then due to local opposition but elements were being in part reintroduced, without consultation, now under experimental traffic orders. Nickie was keen to hear what local people wanted now. The consensus was that time had moved on and so had the need for such a scheme. The lack of consultation with local residents on this and many other issues was raised as were concerns about the further erosion of the democratic process in the ideas proposed by central Government in the Planning White Paper, now being introduced in the Planning Bill 2021.

Licensing issues from Shisha Cafes to Pedicabs were then raised. Nickie's first Private Members Bill addressed this latter issue and she explained that progress had been slow due to Covid and procedural issues, but she remains optimistic that licensing will be introduced in due course. Nickie was asked about boundary changes and said there was so much synergy between Westminster and the City she would be sorry to lose the latter but looked forward to new challenges.

E-scooters are a relatively new issue with Westminster set to join numerous other local boroughs trialling them – concerns were raised particularly with regard to serious injuries sustained by young children due to accidents involving these vehicles. Crime and the lack of visible policing are also affecting parents' decisions about where to live. She was told that security in some parts of Marylebone has become a major concern for many locals yet the scale of the problems does not appear to be represented in crime statistics.

Residents Congestion Charge discount was next on the agenda, it is considered a deterrent to families wanting to move into the area. Nickie said that the Mayor was expected to reverse his decision this autumn. Wider concerns about traffic management schemes were raised. Nickie sympathised with dissatisfaction over unused bicycle lanes and road narrowings that are generating congestion and increasing pollution, affecting many local residents. She reminded us that she too lives in Westminster and is adversely affected by the changes that TfL and WCC have introduced in recent times.

Nickie finished by reminding us that she has just launched the Two Cities Photographic competition in honour of Neil Jellev. local resident and keen

photographer, who recently died. Residents are encouraged to take a photograph that sums up their favourite activity or place and send it in by 31st August.

## Oxford Street - Update from Mayfair

Currently work is finishing, albeit at a much increased cost, on the Mound at Marble Arch and soon work will commence on a much more expensive development at Oxford Circus. Both of these are designed to increase visitors to Oxford St. It is legitimate to question not only whether these are economically justified, but also what they are meant to be attracting shoppers here for?

There has been a lot of discussion about the macro issues particularly the move towards online shopping and certainly Oxford Street is starting to look rather tacky.

Between Marble Arch and Oxford Circus, we now have: 11 Candy stores, 5 cheap souvenir stores and 10 empty units.

This does not sit well with the image of the nation's premier shopping street. Rather the opposite, and the situation has now got worse with the announced closure of all Gap stores. What is next? It is all very well to spend loads of money to encourage visitors on Mounds and Piazzas but if that only leads to disappointment one must ask what is the point? Surely first of all rid the street of these Candy stores and cheap souvenir shops and give the public a real reason to come back to Oxford Street.

Westminster needs to give attention to the product rather than the wrapper, they need to ensure the quality of the shopping offer, otherwise all is in vain.

We would suggest waking up and smelling the coffee - but sadly there are too few opportunities to even do that!

*Mike Dunn, Chair Mayfair Residents Group*

## E-Scooter Trail Begins

As mentioned last month the E-SCOOTER TRIAL (ZONES B, D & F) is to be introduced in our area. It is being introduced by means of Experimental Traffic Orders made under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, which means no prior consultation needs to take place

The idea is that its operation and impact on the surrounding area can be monitored and, if necessary, suspended or modified.

The Experimental Traffic Orders will become operational on 15th July 2021 and will continue in force for a maximum period of 18 months. After the changes have been in force for a minimum period of six months without

changes have been in force for a minimum period of six months without change, the City Council will consider whether the scheme should be retained on a permanent basis, depending on the success of the measures.

The e-scooter parking places can only be used by rental e-scooters provided through the experimental trial being run by Transport for London (TfL), details of those in the Marylebone area below:

Devonshire Street; Portland Place; Portman Square; Stratford Place; Thayer Street; Montagu Street and old Quebec Street.

Any person wishing to object to the scheme being made permanent may do so within the first six months from when it becomes operational.

WSP is the agent acting on behalf of Westminster City Council - any observations or comments you may wish to make on this scheme should be sent to them in writing, by 14th January 2022, quoting reference 7627 in any response. At the end of the six-month evaluation period, all responses received by this date will be forwarded to the City Council for consideration. The City Council will then decide whether to make the scheme permanent or modify or abandon the scheme.

## Highways Maintenance Review

Westminster Council has a legal obligation under the Highways Act of 1980 to ensure that our highways, footways, public lighting and general infrastructure are well maintained, legally safe and effective. The Marylebone Association play their part in this process and regularly make submissions. But our members can participate also. If you see a faulty light or dodgy pavement slab or feel that the carriageway is not up to standard let us know or report it yourself on the Council's website. For longer-term issues, such as resurfacing of roads or upgrading of pavements make your suggestions through this link to Highways nomination form 2022 to 2023 | Westminster City Council

WCC is putting together nominations for the programme of 22/23 but they also have a Minor Works Programme which can be added to. All the amenity societies within Westminster play their part in putting forward suggestions. Nominations are important as they are part of the process. If we don't put forward suggestions which we think need attention they may slip through the net.

The transport infrastructure in the City of Westminster is of local and national importance and it is crucial that the highway network is adequately maintained. This includes not just carriageways and footways, but also bridges, street lighting, drainage and signage. WCC has a team of inspectors who make assessments based on various criteria known as VM – value management. The pandemic has had an effect on both the inspections and the meetings of the Review Panel in which the Marylebone Association takes part. It is hoped that the Panel will be able to meet properly in October to discuss the rolling programme – therefore suggestions from us - and you, are needed by 3 September.

Although this sounds mundane, it is in fact crucial to all of us and commands a considerable budget of over £12 million annually. Repairs and maintenance

a considerable budget of over £12 million annually. Repairs and maintenance are costly. One area where they may have to revisit the current programme is drainage after the torrential rain we had earlier in July. Are the gullies up to the job? Do they need further attention in case of a recurrence?

At the same time, WCC is working to reduce its carbon footprint and road maintenance is a heavy polluter due to the diesel machines that are used. In King Street, they have been experimenting with a more carbon-efficient scheme avoiding the use of diesel.

Gas lighting in the cherished listed columns, of which there are 139 in Westminster, is unreliable and costly. To reduce energy and maintain safer standards these are being replaced with LED lights with gas effect. Lighting is also an important factor in reducing ASB – anti-social behaviour. The Council has been working towards reducing energy consumption throughout the City with the use of LED lighting where possible.

All this has to be done whilst also cross-checking with utility works and major public works schemes – such as the Oxford St District works which affect the Marylebone area a great deal. It is like an enormous jigsaw puzzle that needs constant attention.

As residents, we are in an excellent position to see and take note of the problems which need attention throughout Marylebone. Responses can be made either as individuals or through the Marylebone Association for us to collate. All suggestions will be considered and possibly included in the rolling programme of the PPM. If you see any urgent faults which need immediate attention they should be reported on the WCC website - [www.westminster.gov.uk/report-it](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/report-it).

The deadline for the next stage of the rolling programme 22/23 is 3rd September.

## Changes on Ward Safer Neighbourhood Panel

The Ward Safer Neighbourhood Panel chair, Yael Saunders has stood down and will be replaced by Helen Burrige of the Baker Street BID. A new PC - Chloe Flux will be joining the existing officer for our area - at least until September when she will be replaced by a graduate trainee.

The recent resignation of two of Marylebone Association members from its panel, means that at present, there are now no resident representatives left on it. If any readers care to try to redress the balance, we will be only too happy to put your names forward - please write to us at [admin@marylbone.org](mailto:admin@marylbone.org)

Generally, crime in our area appears to be increasing. With the easing of Covid restrictions, fewer people are now at home, more are on the streets and pubs are open for extended hours.

Specifically, street crime (thefts of bags, phones etc ) is on the rise and there is a warning about "table surfing" (theft of phones from restaurant tables by



is a warning about table sunning ( theft of phones from restaurant tables by distracting owners). However violent crime, while rising in London is still fairly rare in Marylebone, but the recent murder in Oxford Circus has caused some alarm, and knife crime incidents are on the rise.

Matters of concern raised by local neighbourhood panels are as follows:

- Rough Sleeping/Aggressive begging -again on the increase with improved weather
- Inappropriate Behaviour/Aggressive cycling on pavements -lacking any Police action
- E scooters -illegal use (a "Test" will start in Westminster in August).

Key areas for action are stated as:

- Violent Crime
- E Scooters and Bikes
- Anti-Social behaviour

The Met Police are now setting up "Police Encounter Panels". These are focussed on "Younger people, ethnic minorities and those who have had an interaction with the Police". It appears that this is intended to help defuse Police public interactions although it may be more of a PR exercise, given the potential make up of the panel. There do not appear to be too many opportunities for the more typical Marylebone resident - but plenty for pressure groups.

With the E scooter tests starting in Westminster in Early August, it is important that any incidents (injury/theft, assault or dangerous riding ) are reported to the Police, in order to monitor the real impact of what appears to be an ill-advised experiment.

# AROUND WESTMINSTER

## Licensing - More Al Fresco Fun for Residents

Following the lifting of the majority of Covid restrictions from 19 July, WCC have announced they will be re-opening all the roads which have been temporarily closed and removing all the barriers currently in place on 1 October 2021 - in line with previous announcements. However there has been considerable business pressure to explore options for permanent schemes, and WCC say they will be consulting with residents to make sure any future schemes are appropriate for the local area and have resident support.

Each scheme will be subject to resident and business consultation and only proceed if there is resident support - say WCC. The timing of the consultation

and potential introduction of these schemes will depend upon the area and the scale of what is being proposed and what needs to be put in place before it can start. Presently in our area, there will be a consultation on the permanent closure of part of Marylebone Lane. Details of upcoming consultations will be available on the WCC [website](#).

Further, the Government intends to extend the Business and Planning Act 2020 – to enable the pavement licensing scheme to run to the end of September 2022. The new scheme will be open for applications shortly after the legislation is approved in Parliament, and all those who hold a licence that is due to expire by 30 September 2021 and wish to continue some form of outdoor dining will need to submit a new application. Businesses will be able to continue to apply for pavement licences on existing footways where there is clearance.

## Westminster and Cities of London to split?

Readers may recall that last year it was confirmed that a number of our ward boundaries were to change. For instance here in Marylebone, Bryanston and Dorset Square and Marylebone High Street are going to be replaced by a new Marylebone Ward. Now radical changes are proposed to our Parliamentary boundaries.

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) has produced its initial proposal for changes to the current Cities of London & Westminster constituency, which is too small by the new constituency measures and therefore needs to be enlarged.

To get to the correct number of electors, the BCE has come up with an unnecessarily drastic form of surgery. It is proposed to split the City of London from the Westminster part of the constituency – and to couple it with Islington South. Our constituency would gain four wards, two from within Westminster and two from Kensington and Chelsea.

This would effectively break the links between the City of London and the City of Westminster, established since the boundary changes of 1950. Before that, the City of London formed a two-member constituency on its own. It was then joined with Westminster in what made a natural fit between the two historical centres of the capital. The City of London as an international financial centre complimenting Westminster as the UK's political centre, home to the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey., Whitehall and Downing Street as well as the Monarchy at Buckingham Palace.

This is not the Boundary Commission's first attempt to slice us up. Since 2013 they have had the splitting off of the Two Cities in their sights, which is odd, as it seems to be a natural fit. The same cannot be said for the City of London and Islington - which would appear to be a most unnatural allegiance. However the last attempt failed in 2016 due to the strength of opposition to the idea, and we can only hope the same will happen this time.

A consultation on this is open now. The deadline for responses is midnight on

Monday 2 August. Whether this latest attempt to split our Constituency is again fought off will largely depend on the responses received. We strongly feel the Two Cities should remain as a single constituency.

You can view maps of the new Islington South constituency [here](#) and the Westminster & Chelsea East constituency [here](#). You can read the entire BCE report [here](#).

If you have any difficulty submitting your views through the website, you can alternatively do so by [email](#) or send a hard copy to

Boundary Commission for England, 35 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BQ.

## Basement Extensions and the Risk of Flooding

In the same month that parts of North Westminster have witnessed serious flooding, a new study has discovered that London basement extensions are now as normal as loft conversions,

The report, *Bunkering down? The geography of elite residential basement development in London*, calculated that the combined depth of all of these schemes would be 15.8 miles (25.5km), equivalent to 31 times the height of the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai.

The schemes contain 532 swimming pools, 814 cinemas, 1,695 gyms, 689 wine cellars, 607 games rooms, 342 steam rooms or saunas and 154 staff quarters, according to an analysis of planning applications by researchers at Newcastle University's School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape. Little justification here then for those that argue basement extensions are necessary to help tackle London's housing shortage.

The researchers also estimated that more than 1.782m cubic metres of earth have been excavated from under Greater London to construct these basements – 12 times the volume of St Paul's Cathedral.

The study classified the basements, most of which the researchers said have been built or were under construction, into three size categories. Standard developments of a single storey made up almost 80% (5,813) of the schemes, with Hammersmith and Fulham having the highest number (1,285).

A further 1,344 (18.3%) were classified as large basements, big enough to contain a swimming pool. The researchers also identified 171 (2.3%) mega-basements, some of which were three storeys in-depth and extended under the garden. Kensington and Chelsea have the highest number of both these types, followed, readers will not be surprised to hear, by Westminster.

Mary Dhonau, a former CEO of the National Flood Forum and an independent flooding expert, described the study's findings as "mind-blowing". She added: "I hope that ..(the recent floods) were a stark reality check for planners. We should not be excavating huge basements and displacing soil that we need to

percolate rain, especially in built-up areas.”

Karen Buck, MP for Westminster North said many constituents had raised concerns that the scale of basement excavation was a contributing factor to the flooding. “We have had reports that big basements have been flooded in St John’s Wood, which is on a hill,” she added.

## Now TfL wants to keep Westway at 30mph!



The Westway was originally built in 1970 to relieve congestion between Paddington and North Kensington, as an urban motorway (A40M) with a speed limit of 60mph. When the Mayor was set up with his devolved powers in 1999, TfL lost no time in reducing it to 50mph, then about 10 years ago it was again reduced - to 40mph.

About a year ago a section of the road was further reduced to 30mph as a “temporary” measure, purportedly to protect expansion joints; this was however soon extended to the whole 2.5-mile long section of road. In case anyone was minded to regard this as merely advisory the road was then festooned with average speed cameras to ensure total compliance.

Now it comes as little surprise to hear that TfL is proposing that the “temporary” speed limit is made permanent.

This confirms what many have already suspected - that the 30mph limit is there as one more punishment for motorists daring to drive into London rather than for the cited reason of protection of road expansion joints. The permanent 30mph speed limit proposal is justified on grounds of safety. But quite how this justification works on a section of 3 lane motorway where cyclists and pedestrians are banned is hard to see.

As the prelude to implementing this, as legally required, TfL are producing their usual “consultation”. We have often written on the farcical nature of TfL consultations and will not revisit that here. Suffice it to say the survey will be open until 18th August and the planned changes are due to be introduced in spring 2022 - as soon as TfL has mustered various lobby groups to achieve the desired result and got the consultation process out of the way.

See the TfL website at: <https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/lowering-speeds-westminster?cid=speed-westminster>

Email your views to [Haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:Haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk)

## Westminster moves to stop Business to Residential Conversions

Westminster Council is passing an Article 4 Direction for changes of use from Class E (commercial, business and service) to C3 (dwelling houses).

In March 2021 the government introduced new legislation setting out that, as of 1 August 2021, the conversion of Class E (commercial, business and service) floorspace to Class C3 (dwelling-houses) will be deemed permitted development, and therefore does not need planning permission.

The council is now seeking to make an exemption so that Class E floorspace in the Central Activities Zone does not benefit from this new permitted development right, through the introduction of a non-immediate Article 4 Direction. The intention is that upon adoption, this will replace the council's existing Article 4 Direction removing permitted development rights for conversion of B1a (office) floorspace to C3 (dwelling-houses) in the Central Activities Zone. The Article 4 Direction will come into effect on 1st August 2022.

A copy of the Direction and of the Plan defining the area to which it relates may be seen at the offices of the Council at 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP during normal office hours or can be viewed on the Council's [website](#).

If you wish to make representations on the making of the Article 4 Direction, you need to respond by 5pm on 1 September 2021. Representations by email are preferred, and these can be sent to [planningpolicy@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@westminster.gov.uk).

If you would like to send representations by post the address is Planning Policy, 17th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP. All representations should be marked with the subject line Article 4 Direction: Class E to residential development.

## Inflexible Commuters

Commuters say 'useless' flexible season tickets "save you almost nothing"

Train commuters can now buy the new season tickets, in a shake-up of railway travel which offers some people savings on certain routes when they commute on two or three days a week.

The move is part of a major reform of train travel which has been necessitated by a rise in working from home during the coronavirus crisis.

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Here is one local view: "For my route from Banbury into Marylebone, the Flexi option is £482 for 8 tickets over 28 days, which equates to £6266 for the year. For an annual season ticket, with 7-day use, it's £6276". Thus representing a massive £10 saving on a year's travel then!

This is going to do little to help the mass return to Marylebone's still empty offices!

## The Marylebone Diary

July traditionally marks the beginning of the summer exodus in Marylebone. As schools shut down, roads and parking spaces are freed up. Office workers grabbing a sandwich are replaced with tourists taking photos. Business suits become outnumbered by shorts and t-shirts. Whilst this year already feels better than last, it is clear that things are still not quite back to normal. Cycle lanes and street closures continue to push traffic into the wrong places. Except for bars and cafes on sunny days, businesses in the area remain subdued. When not on holiday, office workers are still at home. Tourist levels remain down and there are still too many to-let signs in shop windows.

All eyes turn to September. As our children return to their schools it is hoped that confidence will return to our streets, and more normal patterns of life will resume. This is a critical time for business in Marylebone and it will be very interesting to see what challenges lie ahead. In the meantime, all we can do is shop local and urge our local politicians to protect the value of our unique area.

### Noise

Post pandemic construction activity in Marylebone and surrounding areas seems to be reaching a crescendo. It is good that developers are continuing to invest cash into our community but, as ever, their needs must be balanced with those people who make it their home. If you are a business or resident in the area and have suffered from noise or other construction-related issues, the MA would love to know about it so we can get it on the agenda with the Council.

### The MA meeting with Howard De Walden

With so many empty shops on the high street, and our beloved post office shut down, the MA decided to reach out to HDW and ask what is happening. HDW would like residents' views on what they would like to see on our high street - a post office perhaps? We will be meeting with them regularly to find out what is new and coming to our high street.

At present there are some pop-ups, most recently JOY at Portobello which is a mix of a plant shop and café. There are some beautiful plants in-store and the coffee and rum chocolate cake is to die for. There is a new cafe coming to New Cavendish Street and a specialised coffee shop coming to the high street. Rixo women's fashion, another new addition to the high street, had a

party attended by Amber Le Bon last week to celebrate its opening in Marylebone.

## **MA Meeting with MP Nickie Aiken**

*See article above*

Our MP, Nickie Aiken is promoting the Two Cities Photography Competition. Photographers of all ages are encouraged to take a photo that sums up their favourite activity or place in their area and send it to [summersnaps@nickieaiken.org.uk](mailto:summersnaps@nickieaiken.org.uk) Entrants should email up to six photos with their name, age and address.



## **The Changing Weather**

Our changing weather patterns may not only be ruining our days out in the park but also having an effect on our buildings. Queen Anne Street is still closed after masonry started falling from one of the buildings on the street. Investigations are continuing but recent weather may be partly to blame-- or maybe it was damaged by one of the countless nearby development works.

## **Flooding damage at St Mary's Bryanston Square CofE School**

During the recent flooding, St Mary's Bryanston Square CofE school fell victim and unfortunately had to close for a couple of days. The school has now reopened and a couple of year groups are schooling in St Mary's Church. Many resources have been destroyed and it will be a huge project to get school back to full working order.

Insurance and the state will cover a great deal of this. However due to the subscription of the school compared to the other state schools in the Marylebone area, government funding is less substantial. If you would like to make a donation to help a local Marylebone school please follow this link to the PTA site: <https://fosma.uk/>.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Harley Street Area Partnership

### **BID PROPOSAL LAUNCH EVENT - 5 AUGUST 2021**

With the Government's recovery roadmap finally looking on track and restrictions likely to ease later in July the [Harley Street Area Partnership](#) are excited to be able to hold their Partnership launch event at which they will present our BID Proposal.

Eligible businesses will be asked to vote at a ballot later in the year and this event will be a great opportunity to meet the team, learn more about the vision and the future potential of the Harley Street area as they work to become a business improvement district.

## EVENTS

### **PADDINGTON BASIN**

Saturday 21st August at 10.30am

Following our recent visit to the King's Cross development, Blue Badge Guide, Janice Liverseidge, is taking us on another tour of a part of London which was also, until recently, something of a derelict wasteland – Paddington Basin. Paddington has long been one of Britain's most splendid and historically significant railway termini and on this walk we will follow The Grand Union Canal, meandering gently towards Little Venice, an oasis of leafy calm with some of the finest early domestic Victorian architecture in London.

Our walk leads us to the magical area of Little Venice and its links with poetry, science and art. From the engineering of Brunel to the poetry of Robert Browning, we also learn about the area's connections with computer genius Alan Turing, artist and architect Thomas Heatherwick, encounter Paddington Bear and discover a rare example of an old horse hospital.

The walk will last one and a half hours and we will finish our walk canal-side outside Paddington Station entrance so that we are near the canal for anyone wanting to stay in the area for drinks/lunch. The cost is £10 per person and to reserve your place email: [lois.german@marylebone.org](mailto:lois.german@marylebone.org) or telephone 0207 487 2706.

### **SUMMER WINE TASTING AND LUNCH Sunday 22nd August 2021 at 1:30pm**

ISHTAR TURKISH RESTAURANT, 10-12 Crawford Street W1U 6AZ



Engin Servi – the owner of Ishtar is happy to continue holding our Annual August Wine Tasting lunch. There will be a selection of summer rosé and white wines, plus light reds – it's not at all serious but a fun and enjoyable event.

Cost per person including wine, lunch, tea/coffee & service. £35 payable on the day.

Please contact Sheila Green at [sheila.green@marylebone.org](mailto:sheila.green@marylebone.org) or 0207 262 7157 to book your place.

Other events coming soon: (we haven't forgotten!)

Dinner at Bright Courtyard – exact date tba

Tour of Selfridges with breakfast at The Brasserie of Light

## **REGULAR ASSOCIATION EVENTS**

### **BOOK CLUB**

Tuesday 3 August 2021 at 6.30 pm

At last, members will be meeting again 'for real' in August, upstairs at The King's Head pub in Westmoreland Street. Anyone who is interested in joining in should contact Liz Queenan. Meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 6.30.

This month's choice is *Burning the Books – A History of Knowledge Under Attack* by Richard Ovendon. 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 9 August, 2021 6.30 pm

The Larrik, 32 Crawford Place, W1H 5NN Tel 020 773 0066

We have our regular two tables reserved. It is always a very enjoyable evening and a wonderfully informal opportunity to meet local fellow residents and make new friends in the friendly surroundings of one of our nicest gastro pubs. Everyone is welcome, pay-as-you-go bar and delicious light supper snacks, hot and cold, always available so do come along.

### **SCRABBLE CLUB**

Tuesday 10th and 24th August at 5.00 pm

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

Good news! The Scrabble Club is back at our new upstairs venue at The Duke of Wellington pub in Crawford Street. Members normally meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, with Scrabble sets and dictionaries provided – and all levels of players welcome. Anyone interested in joining and/or wanting further information should contact [rosemarv.fordan@marvlebone.org](mailto:rosemarv.fordan@marvlebone.org) or 0788 789 1977.