

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Simon Birkett and Chris Barrass

There have been several key themes in 2019.

AIR POLLUTION

Despite years of campaigning by Clean Air in London, established under the auspices of the Knightsbridge Association in 2006, and as a separate legal entity in 2010, air pollution in Knightsbridge remains some of the worst in London. A little-known monitor near Harrods reported annual mean concentrations of 93 micrograms per cubic metres ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) and 374 hourly exceedances in 2005 and of 55 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 13 exceedances by 31 October, compared to legal limits of 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 18 exceedances respectively. Combustion fumes from diesel vehicles and gas heating, cooking and power generation are largely to blame. The KA supports therefore the Mayor's plan to extend the Ultra Low Emission Zone to inner London by 2021 and his designation of two Air Quality Focus Areas covering Brompton Road and Knightsbridge (the road). More ambitious policies, measures and enforcement are needed at national, London and local level to comply with World Health Organisation guidelines and legal limits.

STOPPING DEATHS AND INJURIES FROM ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS

Brompton Road and Knightsbridge have continued to see a number of tragic deaths and life-changing injuries from road traffic collisions in recent years. These may be caused by more vehicles (including mopeds) and cyclists speeding or jumping red traffic lights, and pedestrians distracted by mobile phones or listening to music. Action is being taken. Westminster is relocating the pedestrian



Dangerous pedestrian crossing at Trevor Place/Trevor Street

crossing on Knightsbridge, between Trevor Place and Trevor Street, and adding a raised table and pavement improvements, and Transport for London plans to install two countdown-style pedestrian crossings by Brompton Square (i.e. one for each carriageway). Both locations have seen a number of bad collisions and a fatality. To improve quality of life and reduce collisions, we are also very supportive of Westminster's proposals for 20 mph speed limits across the whole of the borough following its successful trial around 39 schools. Whether we like it or not, we need better enforcement of road rules for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians as well as the modernisation of restrictions on electric bicycles and scooters e.g. to treat them like powered vehicles. Despite being illegal currently for use on UK roads or pavements, these scooters are increasingly popular. As ever there

are arguments on both sides: the safety of scooter, pedestrian and other road users on one side and eco-friendly, non-emissions transportation on the other, to name a few. On a separate matter, we have asked Cllr Devenish AM for help lobbying the Mayor and Metropolitan Police to make the use of police sirens 'risk based' as they have been for ambulances since our request several years ago. This would reduce unnecessary night-time noise.

BUSES, TAXIS AND LOCAL CONGESTION

Transport for London's efforts to reduce the number of buses in Oxford Street must have been at least partly to blame for the permanent loss of the popular Number 10 bus which took us along Oxford Street, to the British Museum and beyond. The newish Number 23 bus runs along Kensington Road and Knightsbridge up Park Lane to Marble Arch and Edgware Road, but it is not a substitute. The 390 bus is worth trying, once you get to Hyde Park Corner or Marble Arch, because it runs down Oxford Street to the British Museum, British Library and well beyond. On a positive note, the equally popular Number 9 bus seems to be back to normal, though still facing long delays at Piccadilly Circus.

There have been different problems around the Hans Road, Walton Place, Basil Street junction where the two restaurants have caused traffic to grid lock at times as taxis and minicabs drop-off or collect people. RBKC has taken action but enforcement remains a problem and it may be necessary to review the restaurant licenses or take more dramatic action such as banning traffic turns.

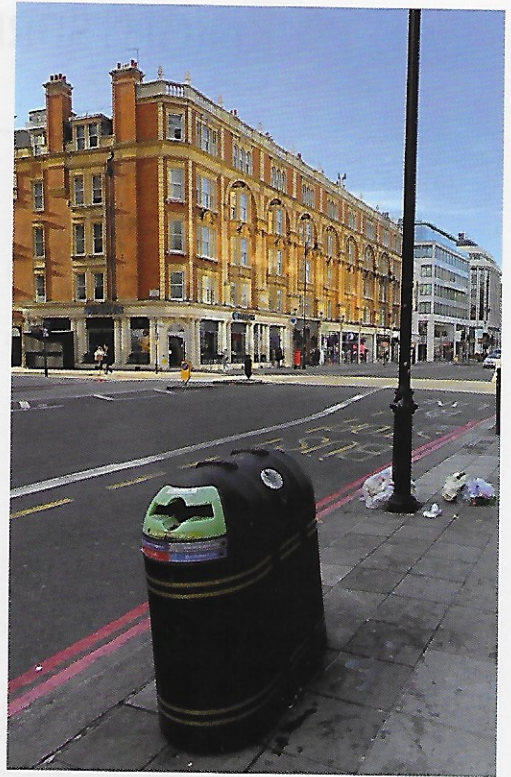
INFRASTRUCTURE PROBLEMS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Westminster City Council (WCC) is taking several steps to improve infrastructure in our area. First, they have restored the heritage pillars and lamps at the top of Rutland Gate which had become very dilapidated. Second, several of the taller heritage street lights have been replaced or upgraded to make them brighter, more reliable and more energy efficient. Third, WCC has supported G Network, a 'Fibre to the Premises' provider, bringing ultra-fast broadband to Knightsbridge. Internet speeds of 100 megabytes per second (Mbps) to 10 gigabytes per second (10,000 Mbps) are being advertised. Search G Network online for details. Fourth, WCC has begun installing electric charging points in street lamps and approved plans to install several parking places in Exhibition Road with chargers. This will be of major benefit to those wishing to do their bit to reduce air pollution by driving electric vehicles. Fifth, the road carriageway has been resurfaced in Montpelier Walk and Trevor Place. These are most welcome developments. Other priorities needing constant attention include storm water drains which are often completely blocked, and broken paving (such as in Cheval Place

from building works) and tarmac instead of York stone or modern paving on prominent streets. The former is particularly important because WCC has declared about half of Knightsbridge to be within two 'Surface Water Flood Risk Hotspots' in its latest Strategic Flood Risk Assessment report. Separate to all the above, Cadent, on behalf of National Grid Gas, has spent much of the year digging up Brompton Road near the London Oratory on gas mains replacement. Regrettably, the complexity of the task, with so many other utilities and underground facilities in that location, has meant that the work will not be finished before the winter season and so will have to be reinstated and restarted in 2020. For more information, please call 0800 389 8261 or email info@communityrelations.co.uk. Other works have been going on near the Berkeley Hotel.

RUBBISH, RECYCLING AND STREET CLEANSING

Rubbish, recycling, street cleansing and weed removal continue to concern many residents and businesses despite WCC's best efforts, and we draw your attention to the excellent articles elsewhere in this magazine. Concerns range from the need for more frequent collections of recycling (now that so much packaging comes from



Greasy pavement in Brompton Road

home delivery) to grease-stained pavements and litter and cigarette butts strewn many side-streets. There is an ongoing problem with foxes ripping open rubbish bags at night to reach bones and carcasses, followed by birds and vehicles spreading what's left across our roads and pavements. One visitor described the effect one morning as 'third world'. Perhaps a campaign is needed to highlight these problems and potential solutions, such as the use of elegant, low profile, central rubbish collection facilities that leave streets spotless in France. Meanwhile, we are working with WCC and the Forum to get streets cleaned. You can help by reporting every instance of litter or rubbish put on streets outside permitted hours and other local problems to www.westminster.gov.uk/report-it. Enforcement action and clearance usually follows swiftly and firmly.

Last but not least, we have supported the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum in its work to pursue 85 actions identified in the Knightsbridge Management Plan and in applications for the spending of the neighbourhood portion of Community Infrastructure Levy monies (see following pages).



Fibre optic cable works in Ennismore Gardens