



NO. 181
THE CLARION CALL OF
THE SOHO SOCIETY

SOHO clarion

spring
2022

The Soho Society's **Free** and yet
Priceless Magazine

ELECTION
SPECIAL





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Soho Clarion Spring 2022

- 2 Editorial**
From Soho Society Chair Tim Lord
- 3 NEWS**
Our community updates including licensing, planning, housing, ward panel and other news
- 15 Nickie Aiken**
Member of Paliament
- 16 Jonathan Glanz**
Councillor
- 17 Pancho Lewis**
Councillor
- 18 Election 2022: Question to the Candidates**
Tim Barnes, Eoghain Murphy, Julie Redmond, Paul Fisher, Jessica Toale, Patrick Lilley
- 28 FEATURES**
The Property Connection
Tim Lord
- 30 Matthew Bennett retires**
Richard Piercy
- 32 Upstairs Downstairs Art**
Clive Jennings
- 34 Golden Square Stolperstein**
Ruth Mandel
- 35 REVIEWS**
Bacon in Moscow
Clive Jennings
- 36 Theatres, Museums & Galleries**
London Living Large
- 37 A Case of the Disappearing Actor**
Clive Jennings
- 38 Chocolate Heaven**
David Gleeson
- 39 RECIPE**
Rosemary Koftas
Susan Fleming
- 40 DIARY**
The Rector Writes
Rev'd Simon Buckley

Cover image: Jason Fisher-Jones

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EDITOR Jane Doyle

FROM THE TOWER



Welcome to our special local election issue of the Clarion, the Soho Society’s free, yet priceless, magazine.

The local elections will take place on Thursday 5 May 2022 and Soho’s residents will be asked to vote for three candidates from a field of six or more to be our ward councillors for the next four years. The Conservative party and the Labour party have fielded three candidates each.

In 2018 41 Conservative Ward councillors were elected to the council and 19 Labour councillors. The share of the vote was 42.3% Conservative and 40.3% for Labour. The Conservatives have controlled Westminster continuously since it became a borough in the mid-1960s. However, the vote difference between the two parties in 2018 was just 2.0 per cent, the smallest ever.

The West End Ward is now made up of Soho, Mayfair, the southern part of Marylebone and a chunk of Fitzrovia following the boundary changes that took place in 2020. The election is likely to be highly contested here and every vote will count. These are the results from the last election [2018 results], and a map of the ward can be viewed on our website, www.thesohosociety.org.uk

Ravenscroft, Alan W.	LD	Liberal Democrats	127	
Chevoppe-Verdier, Florian D.J.G.	LD	Liberal Democrats	142	
Taylor, Sophie A.	LD	Liberal Democrats	178	
Fry, Minne	GRE	Green Party	188	
Whelan, Ronald	CAPO	Campaign Against Pedestrianisation of Oxford Street	291	
Su, Hillary	CON	Conservative Party	868	
Saville, Caroline L.R.	LAB	Labour Party	927	
Lilley, Patrick E.J.	LAB	Labour Party	947	
Glanz, Jonathan*	CON	Conservative Party	973	Yes
Lewis, Pancho	LAB	Labour Party	984	Yes
Barnes, Timothy P.L.	CON	Conservative Party	990	Yes

For 50 years the Soho Society has sought to make Soho a great place for people to live, work and visit. While that does depend on everyone to make it work the role of Westminster City Council is very important. Members of its committees decide for or against every planning and licensing application, its members set licensing and planning policy and its officers run housing, education and waste services throughout Westminster. Over the next four years, as part of the recovery from the pandemic, Soho faces significant changes - some good and some bad - and it is essential that our ward councillors both understand Soho’s unique concerns and are free to speak truth to power on those issues. Soho may only be a tiny area but it plays a disproportionate role in London and the UK economy generating, for example, £200 million per annum in business rates. It is also significantly impacted by

the increasing concentration of alcohol licences and late night entertainment - all of which is under the control and regulation of the council.

We are encouraging all West End Ward residents to get up to speed on the candidates and the issues, to register to vote if you have not already done so and to vote either in person or by postal ballot. To that end this edition has a set of 16 questions that have been put to the six candidates for the main parties. You can read their detailed responses from pages 18. In addition we are talking to each of the candidates on the Soho Society Hour on Soho Radio which is broadcast every Thursday morning at 9am. You can listen again to the relevant show to hear each candidate and what they said about Soho on the Soho Society’s website (www.thesohosociety.org.uk) or listen live on the internet through the Soho Radio culture stream. Finally, we are also organising a hustings to take place on Thursday 28 April 2022 at 6 pm in St. Anne’s Community Hall, 55 Dean Street, London W1D 6AF, to which ALL West End Ward voters are invited. If you want to join in please register here <https://hustings.eventbrite.co.uk>. Please let us know in advance if you want to ask a question and what your question is.

Also in the news is that the council has delayed any action on its Vision for Soho proposals until after the election. It says it has “run out of time”, but that makes little sense given that the date of the elections has been known for some years. One possible view is that the council did not want to impose some of the more controversial proposals (late night outdoor entertainment in many of Soho’s residential streets until 11 pm) on Soho’s voters during the election period. In its report on the consultation it failed to separate out the votes of residents from other interested parties so no one can tell if the majority of residents are in favour of closing streets or not. However we have little doubt that the council does plan to impose those decisions on Soho after the election and it will be very important to have Ward Councillors who can speak up for Soho’s residents as those plans are finalised and implemented.

It is important to hold our elected representatives to account and that process starts with asking relevant questions and listening carefully to the answers. Please join us in helping to make that process work. The engagement of the community is what has made Soho special for the last 50 years, and we hope to make sure the next 50 years will also be something to be proud of.

THE FUTURE OF SOHO HOUSING



Barbara Brownlee, the CEO of Soho Housing Association, previously Westminster City Council's Executive Director of Growth, Planning and Housing was recently interviewed in City AM. Here are some of her thoughts.

Q. Recently, insurance company Admiral warned that nine out of ten Londoners are unable to keep up with the rent. Is that something you're seeing? How are you working to tackle the problem?

Absolutely. Affordability in London has become a bigger issue over the last ten years or so. Even since the outset of the pandemic, rents have risen quite dramatically in some areas of the capital and, with prices of everyday supplies increasing, more and more of the population is feeling the pinch. In fact, I saw a report recently showing that the average Londoner spends more than 70% of their income on rent, so there is no doubt that more needs to be done across the board to tackle London's affordability problem.

That's why affordable and social housing has never been more important and, post-lockdown, we're even more passionate about providing it in central areas like Soho, Covent Garden and Bloomsbury. We are always looking for opportunities to build new affordable homes for more Londoners who need them. For example, we have a Hidden Homes project running this year, which is identifying opportunities to create new flats within our own portfolio.

Q. How vital a role can housing play in the bounceback of London's economy post pandemic?

It's essential, and this is what we're really passionate about at Soho Housing. Lockdown proved that central London must rely on more than just sandwich shops and bars for office workers, as it was deserted during those months. Now, with many companies setting up a hybrid model, there are going to be areas of the capital that remain much quieter than they were pre-pandemic. This is where housing can come in. We must create areas in Soho, for example, where people who work in central London can also live in central London. Real communities can then re-emerge, supporting both an economic and social bounce-back.

We've been creating affordable homes in central London for nearly 50 years now – we celebrate our 50th anniversary next year – and arguably our mission has never been more important than it is post-pandemic.

Q. Why was central London hit so badly during the Covid-19 pandemic in comparison to other cities?

There's long been a view that, without office workers and tourists, London would be a ghost town; now we know that's broadly true! Really, this goes to the heart of the issue: not enough people actually call the heart of London 'home'. In comparison to other countries and cities, where business districts are not so far away from residential hubs, communities didn't evaporate so quickly when the country was locked down. Take Copenhagen, for example – whilst our city lay dormant, the cooperative model of the Danish capital meant people were out exercising and shopping (for essentials!) in the city centre throughout lockdown. People lived near the heart of the city, so it maintained a drumbeat of activity despite restrictions and kept communities bound together.

As we exit an era of restrictions and lockdowns, we should learn from cities like Copenhagen. This could be done by putting greater protections in place so that particular streets do not end up being a collection of second homes or on airbnb or short lets, and local authorities, developers and housing providers should be looking to work more closely together to create more homes that people can actually afford to live in.

Q. How can London learn from what happened during the pandemic?

I do think the whole of London should be looking to diversify how it uses its space, particularly with the shifts in work habits we've seen over the last couple of years. After all, London is about more than just work; it's a vibrant city – full of cultural experiences, places to eat and stories to hear – so why should certain pockets of it only be used by the office worker population?

Exiting lockdown, we need to rethink the way that we use central London. We must begin to rebuild urban communities and that starts by ensuring that local people can actually afford to live here.

PLANNING



We're watching

I have taken on the role of chairing the monthly Planning Group meetings from Matthew Bennett for six months, starting in February. It would be hard to over-estimate Matthew's contribution to Soho on planning issues over many years, and I trust the Society will recognise this in some way. If we are able to sustain anywhere close to a similar level of effectiveness in the coming years that will be quite an achievement! It's good to know that Matthew will still continue to have some level of involvement, and we'll value his continuing wisdom.

The next few months will undoubtedly involve a few changes in the way we work. Among other things, we'd like to make it easier for Society members to get involved with the Planning Group and I'll be working with Tim Lord and others to see if we can find ways to do that. Watch this space, as they say!

In the wider world, Westminster Council has launched new Early Engagement guidance, encouraging developers to consult with local communities early on in the process of developing plans. This should help us to have an influence in improving some planning applications. However, it is only guidance so, if an application conforms to policy, the council will not be able to refuse it just because the consultation process was poor.

Westminster officers have agreed to re-establish regular meetings with us after the May election. Before the pandemic, these were a valuable opportunity to ask

questions and to give feedback over a broad range of planning issues, helping us to understand better how the council was dealing with planning issues. We look forward to seeing Deirdra Armsby, Westminster's Director of Place Shaping & Town Planning, and Steve Brandon, who leads the Central Area planning team, in May or June.

We have not seen any planning applications for significant redevelopment projects so far this year and it is probably still too early to say for certain how the pandemic will affect Soho. The main battleground has been the prospect of the council's Vision for Soho enabling an increase in permanent al fresco drinking and dining. Westminster has announced what seems to be a convenient delay in the Vision process until after the May election. However, Shaftesbury are currently consulting about their plans for a significant al fresco landgrab in Chinatown and how Westminster responds to this will be very revealing about their current approach to the public realm in crowded locations. Firm commitments on this issue, and on the wider £150 million plans for spending on the so-called 'Oxford Street District', should be made BEFORE the election, and promises kept!

Among recent objections the Society has made: several inappropriate shopfronts (including 187 Wardour Street and 48 Carnaby Street); an Adult Gaming Centre at 147-149 Wardour Street; and a new 'drinking establishment with expanded food offering' at 50 Dean Street.

Andrew Murray



LICENSING

Since the last issue of the Clarion the Committee has been involved in supporting residents with their representations, one for an event space on Richmond Buildings which is applying for an alcohol licence, Monday to Sunday until 12.00 midnight; the other an application for a new gambling licence at 147-149 Wardour Street. This is for an adult gambling centre and family entertainment centre operating Monday to Sunday until 3am. The applicant already holds two other gambling licences on Wardour Street. We will update you with the outcome in the next edition of the Clarion.

We've completed a review of 28 representations in 2021 and the results highlight the importance of residents and the Society raising their concerns with applications. Our representations to Westminster's Licensing Sub-Committee resulted in 13 applications being either refused, withdrawn or amended. The greatest success occurs when residents send in representations describing their experiences and the issues they live with on a day to day basis. It provides the evidence the Licensing Committee needs when deciding applications. The importance of this was, in fact, mentioned by the Chairman at the last hearing we attended.

An interesting point currently affecting licensing in Soho is the de facto removal of the condition requiring cafes and restaurants to serve alcohol only with a table meal. It means that they can effectively serve alcohol from 9am-9pm without it being ancillary to a meal. On the face of it, this seems fine - there are, after all, plenty of places in Soho

where anyone can go for a drink at just about any time of the day. But this is a problem: because there are already many places to drink, and having many more eateries functioning as bars during the day means more noise and attendant drink-related problems. Of course, Westminster Council have the final say in granting licences, and at the last hearing we attended they were very carefully listening to the pros and cons of allowing another café licence to

serve alcohol alone for 12 hours a day. We will be monitoring this issue and trying to assess the impact of such newly-granted licences on their immediate surroundings.

We want to encourage more residents to send in representations and we are here to help. Please get in touch to discuss any licensing applications or problems you may have.

If you're a Soho Society member interested in knowing how licensing works and keen to take part in an important Society activity, you are welcome to attend our monthly meetings and help monitor licensing applications. Please drop a line to admin@thesohosociety.org.uk and we will contact you.

Lastly, we'd like to thank Richard Brown of the Licensing Advice Project,

Citizens Advice Westminster for all his help, support, and unfailing patience.

Richard can be contacted via email at licensing@westminstercab.org.uk

The Licensing Committee



SOHO'S COMING BACK TO LIFE

By Richard Smith,
Operations Director, Soho Housing

This month, West End footfall reached 79% of pre-pandemic levels – an exciting moment for those of us who are desperate to see Soho and its surrounding areas regain their buzz. Having joined Soho Housing eager to be part of this vibrant community, only to be thrown into a lockdown one week after my arrival, I am one of these people, and during my tenure I have seen the effects of the pandemic on Soho and our residents first-hand.

For example, one of the early consequences of 2020's first lockdown was that we had to pause our much-needed in-person events with residents. In a community that is built on culture, interaction and activity, having to pause face-to-face communication with our residents in their homes was hard.

However, as restrictions have eased in recent weeks, I'm pleased to say we've been given the green light to restart large scale group activities – a clear sign to us that Soho is coming back to life.

One way that we hope to resume these crucial in-person moments is by inviting residents along to estate inspections again. Although we have been able to pop into our buildings to check on the safety and wellbeing of our residents, the congregation of many residents together has not been possible over the past two years, so this will be a real milestone for us. Members of our leadership team will attend these inspections in the coming weeks and months, which will be supplemented by more one-to-one meetings between housing officers and residents, should that be something residents are keen to do.

Our residents' panel (called ReCAP) was sadly another victim of the pandemic, as meetings have had to operate solely on a remote basis since March 2020. But we will

be resuming regular, in-person panel sessions throughout this year and are recruiting more residents to join these meetings. If any of our residents reading this would like to join the panel, don't hesitate to get in touch with your housing officer who can provide further information.

We also plan to invite a member of our residents' panel to our Board meeting in June and are creating opportunities for more residents to become shareholders. Again, if Soho Housing dwellers would like to hear more about getting involved with its Board, do speak with your housing officer.

One of our key goals for the year ahead is to improve representation across our Board – whether it be gender, race or age – so increasing the number of resident shareholders will be an important part of this. All in all, this will ensure that our residents' voices continue to be at the heart of the organisation.

Ultimately, we want to make sure that, as well as restarting these activities, we are doing our utmost to support our residents and the sector in which we operate. As such, this year we will also be taking part in the Regulator of Social Housing's consultation on tenant satisfaction measures, as proposed in the government's

Social Housing White Paper. This consultation is open until 3 March 2022, and we are working with the G320 to co-ordinate our response, so watch this space...

In the meantime, optimism and excitement are the undercurrents to all that we do at the moment. With Spring on the horizon, there is a definite spring in Soho's step. Local businesses, visitors and residents are returning to its streets and the lifting of restrictions means that we can get back out and about with our residents. Ultimately, our beloved Soho has a chance to get back to doing what it does best.



AND NOW FOR THE FUN PART...



Lucy Haine,
Chair: Plan for Soho

Planning is not my day job; I am a retailer by trade. I got involved in Plan for Soho, seven years ago, on a whim. There was a flyer campaign calling for board members to get involved in writing the newly-formed Plan for Soho. I thought this would be interesting, having lived in Soho for many years, but always travelling with work. Learn something new, was my motivation, and gain some pro bono board experience, never imagining I would end up writing part of the plan (Culture, Heritage & Night Time Economy) and becoming Chair of the Steering Group.

It has been a fascinating project: meeting individuals I might never have crossed paths with otherwise; an opportunity to scratch under the skin of Soho - where else would you meet Leslie Hardcastle, Robin Smith of Soho Dairy, Joan Moynihan, CEO of Nimax Theatres, and John James of Soho Estates in a boardroom? It has been enlightening and entertaining, with a few fireworks along the way, and now we reach the fun part with CIL.

Matthew Bennett is a tough Chair to follow, he has quietly, dogmatically, politely and brilliantly, created a precedent, a neutral space for residents and businesses to work together to shape ideas for Soho's future.

As new Chair, it is important that the Plan For Soho Steering Group remains non-political, non-campaigning and neutral. The Forum has one objective, to gather and consider ideas for CIL and spend that money wisely and transparently, involving the whole community, I have a supportive Vice-Chair in Jace Tyrell, CEO of NWECC.

We have a fabulous mix of talent in the Steering Group, all of Soho is represented with theatre, property, F&B, residents and affordable housing across eight businesses, eight residents and three co-opted members. As a commercially driven individual, getting resident and business perspectives in the mix is invaluable. We can help each other to think laterally, creating the art of the possible.

We are putting a process in place to ensure potential CIL infrastructure opportunities are as clear as possible, including consultation with community groups. All CIL applications for Soho pass through the Forum as the elected body of the neighbourhood plan. Ultimately Westminster City Council holds the purse strings, but our role is to ensure that community projects are surfaced and that we aren't backing projects that are the day job for the Council.

We have c.£400k currently in the CIL pot which sounds like a lot, but really isn't when you are looking at infrastructure projects. It may be that CIL starts the conversation and acts as a catalyst to get projects underway which are then funded in their entirety by a mix of bodies.

Over the next few months, we will be sharpening up our governance, holding a community meeting to consider CIL ideas, revamping the Plan for Soho website to a simpler user-friendly format and getting new projects underway.



We are considering a Heritage audit of street signage in Soho, public toilet provision; and CIL projects already in progress include a Rubbish and Recycling report, Greening Golden Square, a new gate for Soho Parish School and air quality and traffic monitoring.

If you have an idea to improve community infrastructure, the CIL committee meets monthly to recommend proposals to the board.

To hear more about Plan for Soho and propose CIL suggestions please come to our Community Spring Drinks, Wednesday 18 May, 6.30pm at Zero One, Hopkins Street. In the meantime, keep an eye on our Twitter and Instagram feed for more news. @planforsoho

Read the Plan for Soho: planforsoho.org

Read more about CIL on Westminster City Council's website.

Contact Lucy: lucy.haine@planforsoho.org

WARD PANEL UPDATE

AND OTHER NEWS

The most recent ward panel meeting took place on 22 February, kindly hosted by Zero One, Hopkins Street, for which we thank them. This was sadly, Steve Muldoon, our dedicated ward officer's last meeting as he's off to pastures new (the licensing department at WCC). It was a lively affair attended by the police, the council, some of the candidates for both the main parties in the upcoming local elections, and residents. A lot of the discussion centred on ASB associated with noise disturbance. The crime figures are creeping up to near pre-pandemic levels, the worst affected streets being those with a high saturation of late night licences - Old Compton, Greek and Dean Streets, as a result of the increase in visitors who, if a little "worse for wear", are potential targets by those on the look-out for easy pickings, particularly in quieter areas where they are then robbed (and perhaps worse).

Some good news is that over the coming weeks we should be seeing an increase in police officers in the West End on both day and night shifts with extra resources at the weekends, as a result of changes made within the Met. Obviously not all of these will be deployed in Soho, but certainly some will be, particularly as Soho has one of the highest crime rates in Westminster.

There were also discussions on cyclists and e-scooters. The former don't think road rules apply to them. They do. As to the latter, apart from those being trialled by the council, they are illegal, despite being easily available in Halfords, Currys, etc. They are only for use on private land at the moment and, once again, their riders don't feel road rules apply to them.

As to pedicabs, legislation is slowly moving forwards. Nickie Aiken's Bill fell, due to objection by one MP. However, she has received a promise from the Prime Minister that Parliament will make time available for this - Mr Johnson saying he's long felt (from his time as Mayor) that regulation was necessary, though as I recall, he did not do much, if anything, about it during that time! Once any legislation moves forward it will then be up to TfL to put it into practice, and hopefully we will have an input into any regulations to be put into place. So fingers crossed, and

thanks to Nickie for her hard work and persistence in trying to take this forward.

The police and council have done several night time operations with pedicabs recently in Soho and Covent Garden, co-ordinated by Steve Muldoon and council officers, which have resulted in various riders being taken to court and fined, given warnings, etc, particularly over music played at full volume, and a real upside to this has been that pedicabs are now not playing music nearly as loudly as they were as they move around the streets, so thanks to all concerned. On one of these operations two passengers got charged £180 for a short journey, and thanks to the efforts of Steve and his team they got the money returned.

However, no further action was taken as the passengers didn't want to take it any further.

If any readers would like to come to future ward panel meetings (held quarterly), please contact me at jdwardpanel@btinternet.com, and I will put you on the list of invitees. Also, if you have issues you want to raise, get in touch. Hopefully, the next one will be shortly after the May elections.

In the meantime, I would like to thank Steve on behalf of the ward panel and the Soho community in general

for all his hard work on our behalf over the last five years - is it really that long? He has often gone above and beyond the call of duty with endless patience, certainly with me, and seemingly, alongside Kenny Brown, who sadly is also moving on, and V Iqbal, keeps Soho under control - no mean feat these days! He's always willing to meet the community to help address problems and rarely gets the thanks he deserves. Also when off duty he deals with things he may see on, for instance, twitter, for which again he deserves thanks. No doubt we'll only be aware of the 'Steve effect' when he's gone! He's also been a real friend to me in what has been a very difficult time in my life, for which I'll always be grateful. So, thank you, Steve.



Jane Doyle

AGE UK WESTMINSTER



Fiona Healy Connolly

Age UK Westminster was established in 1947, and we exist to promote the wellbeing of older people in the City of Westminster to help them lead independent, fulfilling lives for as long as possible.

Our 70+ years of providing services and supporting the older population of Westminster has given us a wealth of experience and expertise in helping older people. We have a dedicated and skilled staff team, the support of over 240 active volunteers and our board of trustees includes nine members of the local community. We provide a range of accessible quality services, and we have grown a broad range of local network connections and knowledge of what is available in the community.

The services that we provide focus on reducing financial hardship, disadvantage and social isolation, and we are the only specialist older people's organisation in Westminster that provides 1:1 advice and support.

Our regular service provision includes befriending, information and advice, older volunteering / general volunteering, community inclusion, activities and outings, digital support, visual impairment support services and our annual Christmas Lunch project.

The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic caused much uncertainty and concern, in particular around our ability to continue to support our local older community with services safely. This was a time when our local older people needed us the most, so we knew we had to act fast to adapt our current services, and we were also fortunate to access emergency Covid-19 funding to continue our support throughout the pandemic.

During the pandemic we moved from face-to-face support to provide telephone befriending and wellbeing check and chat calls, moved our face-to-face I&A support to telephone or video call, created a programme of online activities (ranging from poetry reading to chair yoga and even live DJ sessions), introduced a digital library with tech support so individuals who were digitally excluded could loan a device, emergency food parcel deliveries, prepared meals to the door, prescription collection support and a weekly shopping service.

We take every opportunity to build our skills and understanding of the needs of our beneficiaries, uncover gaps of provision in the area and develop our services accordingly.

In response to the new needs of older people as we emerge from the pandemic, we successfully allocated funding to provide a Complex Needs Information, Advice & Advocacy Service which launched in July 2021.

Following this we have recently secured funding to provide a Dementia Project which will provide group activities in the community and one-to-one befriending, and we have also secured funding to launch an Exercise at Home and walking support programme. Both of these projects will launch in April/May 2022.

If you would like to learn more about our services or to speak to a member of our

team you can contact us in the following ways.

T: 020 3004 5610 (Mon - Fri 10am - 2pm)

E: enquiries@ageukwestminster.org.uk

A: Beethoven Centre, Third Avenue, London W10 4JL

W: www.ageukwestminster.org.uk



ART WEEK 2022 AT SOHO PARISH PRIMARY

This term saw an explosion of creativity across the school as Soho Parish collaborated with the National Gallery for their schools' annual art week. The energy in the school was palpable as the children experimented with sketching, modelling, crafts, painting, collage and a variety of other media to create art works inspired by their visits to the National Gallery. It was also lovely to welcome parents back into the building after so long, to view the exhibition and celebrate our creativity community.

During art week children had the chance to work in mixed age groups with other children from their phase group. They took part in workshops which used paintings from the National Gallery as their starting point. They had the chance to develop and extend skills; express their individual interests, thoughts and ideas. Some pieces were created individually, while others were collaborative pieces. Our inspiration for this year's theme came from our student Arts Council, who worked closely with the National Gallery to help inspire ideas for the week.

The Arts Councillors share their process:

Our Arts Lead Hannah Peaty made a connection with Caroline Smith, Head of Learning at the National Gallery, who was excited to support us in our Art Week planning. She sent us lots of different paintings on padlet to look at and we had to choose the ones that we were interested in. We looked at them as a group and gave comments about what we saw, what we liked and what questions we had. From this, a bespoke session was created for us to visit the gallery.

When we got to the gallery we moved through different rooms, looking at different paintings. We could stop and

point out things we liked and ask questions. Caroline also showed us some of the paintings we had most liked from padlet.

We were encouraged to look at the paintings in different ways

- searching for different things
- asking characters in the painting questions
- using our bodies to act out poses from the paintings
- continuous line drawings to draw what we saw

Once back at school we started to think of art projects related to the themes we saw in the paintings. We came up with so many ideas, which we shared with teachers at a staff meeting. The teachers then decided on a workshop each, which they would lead during the week. We also created an assembly film, which was shared with the whole school introducing the workshops. Each child in the school was then able to choose which workshops they wanted to participate in. Throughout the week, each class also got to visit the National Gallery and have a led session exploring the paintings we were focusing on. On the Thursday, we also had two professional dancers come in to lead dance workshops in response to the paintings. These were a great way to explore different art forms and ways to

express ourselves.

Thank you to the Soho Parish PTA for funding our Art week, we learnt so much and had so much fun! Here are some images of our exhibition, we're really proud of what we achieved!

Helen Peaty



SOHO PARISH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS LIGHTS 2022

“I felt very confident during the workshop that I could accomplish it. The competition inspires children to get creative and I would be so excited if I won. I drew a star as I wanted to show everyone that they can be a light for others.”

Esme, Year 3, Soho Kids Xmas Lights 2021

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) award for most thoughtful consideration of materials and impactful design.

We experience light and its interaction with our surroundings every day. At its core, light has also always had the power to draw people together in celebration in a variety of spaces and places. Following last year's success, the 'Soho Kids Xmas Lights 2022 Project' will enable children to investigate their local architecture and communities and the impact that light has on the spaces where pupils and their neighbours live, learn and play. The project will also give pupils the opportunity to learn about 'Identity of Place' and how the buildings and people we frequently interact with help us to form a unique sense of self. The project will enable pupils to celebrate their own 'Identity of Place' by creating a lighting design inspired by their local architecture and communities.

Antonio Capelao, RIBA Architecture Ambassador, RIBA Learning, and Hannah Peaty, Senior Leader at Soho Parish Primary School, will work with the 150 pupils of the Soho Parish Primary School firstly to explore what the built environment is and the role that lighting can play within it. The children will then research local buildings, communities, cultures and traditions to not only explore the role light plays within each of these elements, but to explore how we create feelings of identity and a sense of place from the areas we inhabit. The children will use their findings to investigate how different forms of light can alter the architecture of our neighbourhoods, and our own sense of place. Finally, they will use their investigations to create lighting designs that celebrate their local neighbourhoods and personal feelings of identity that will be displayed throughout Soho during the festive season.

“When I was doing the workshop I felt excited but also nervous in case I didn't win. I would be so proud of myself if I won! This project is a good opportunity for us to express our creativity. I designed this to include our school logo so it can welcome people to our school.”

Celine, Year 4, Soho Kids Xmas Lights 2021

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) award for most powerful message of togetherness and positivity.

There is a start to this process in the background and grounding of light, its cultural meaning around the world, and an understanding of how it works and what it does, and there is an end goal of a light object created by the children. They will also experience the design process and have the opportunity to understand all steps with guidance and support from educators within the field. Working through a project from concept to completion allows for direct experience of the iterative design process and collective creativity which is central to the work of architects and lighting designers along with the problem solving of engineers and the maker methods of fabricators and trades. Throughout this process the concepts of how the decisions made during these design and fabrication phases will be discussed in how they relate to Light's place in the Urban Fabric and connection with Community, both as a whole and within their community, to enable the children to generate their personal understanding and a position about the Identity of their place. As a fitting conclusion, this project will culminate in an event to give the children an opportunity to showcase their design and creation skills that have been developed and explored during this programme. It will provide an experience of the power light has to bring communities together through a celebration of light, and the light objects made by the primary school students during Christmas 2022.



We are planning to display 35 Christmas street light panels in total - 21 from last year and 14 (2 per year group) new ones around the streets of Soho. We hope our generous sponsors from Soho Kids Xmas Lights 2021 will support us again to enable us to achieve this, and bring a smile not only to the primary school children but the whole community.

“I felt really happy during the workshop and would really enjoy my drawing becoming a light panel. Everyone loved taking part in this.”

Ziggy, Year 2, Soho Kids Xmas Lights 2021

Antonio Capelao, RIBA Architecture Ambassador

Photography by Matt Crossick

THE SOHO SOCIETY HOUR



As ever, there has been a wonderfully eclectic range of speakers over the last months of the old year and the first months of the new year.

In February and March we have been welcoming each week candidates for election to the Westminster City Council in May, from the Conservative and Labour parties. We were particularly interested in what “makes them tick” and what motivates them to stand as a candidate for the local Council, and in particular for the West End Ward, which includes Soho. We also welcomed the two Councillors who are not standing for re-election, one from each of the parties, to tell us about their time as a Councillor for Soho. Candidates from other parties will have an opportunity to take part in the Hustings being hosted by the Soho Society on 28 April at St Annes Church.

Unsurprisingly, as musicians have been drawn to Soho over the centuries, we rarely go many weeks without a musician on the show, and this period has been no exception, with prolific singer/songwriter Tim Arnold who has written many songs about Soho returning with music from his new album, and band leader and saxophonist Ray Gelato. Still very much on a music and jazz note, Ollie Murrey spoke about his documentary “Ronnie’s” about Ronnie Scott.

Staying with Soho’s creative side, this time the theatre world, Matt Morrison and Guy Osborn from the University of Westminster told us about their plans to bring back to life the tiny fringe theatre just north of Oxford Street, the Soho Poly, where the Soho Theatre was first conceived.

Most importantly, local businesses, parents and residents have been well represented.

With two guests a week, it is impossible to mention them all, but check out the Soho Society website - <https://www.thesohosociety.org.uk/soho-radio> - and catch up with the recordings of the shows you have missed.

Leslie Hardcastle, Hon. President of the Soho Society, who was invited by Soho Radio to host a regular programme about Soho when it first went on air in 2014, has bowed out after scarcely missing a show. He thanks all those he co-hosted with over the years, most recently Clare Lynch and Joel Levack. He is proud that during that time guests have been welcomed from every sector of Soho life.

Tim Lord has taken on Leslie’s mantle, including the very important “Soho News” update which opens each programme, and from time to time we will have guests co-hosting if Tim or Joel are unavailable because of work or other commitments.

If you know someone who you think would be a good guest to invite on to the show, or if you yourself have something you would like to share with listeners, do let us know. Our email address is: radio@thesohosociety.org.uk

And a big thank you to all at Soho Radio for continuing to welcome the Soho Society Hour, with special thanks going to those who help with the technicalities of getting the show on air.

Wendy Hardcastle

PILGRIMAGE TO PIZZA

It's a semi-tradition that certain Soho Society events are marked by consumption of Pizza Pilgrims excellent pizzas. Certainly, the last few AGMs have been generously sponsored by Pizza Pilgrims - to the delight of everyone present! - and each year when the Fete has been finally cleared away, Society trustees and volunteers sit around the churchyard table and reward themselves with a Pizza Pilgrims feast.

For anyone who hasn't heard how Pizza Pilgrims started, some years ago owners Thom and James Elliot drove a van to Italy and spent six weeks touring the country, obsessively watching and learning the secrets of successful pizzaiolos everywhere in a quest for perfect pizza. On their return to London, inspired and eager to put all they had learnt into practice, they spent a year or two selling pizza from the back of their van in Berwick Street market.



Their first restaurant premises followed at 11 Dean Street, and this is still going very strong. I spoke to Jamahl, the manager of this flagship since last June: "Feels to me like a long time, but it's flown. I've been working in Soho for a few years - Wingman's, Absurd Bird, which is close to Berwick Street where Pizza Pilgrims started, and then at Pizza Pilgrims in Kingly Court, the second premises, which is the

busiest with all the tourists around there." Jamahl sounds very happy with his job, claiming better working conditions, and listing colleagues who have been with the company for a long time and noting how they take care of employees. I ask him to spell out what it is about their pizza that makes it different to others and Jamahl obliges with: "Our pizzas are mainly Neapolitan, with thick, fluffy crusts, and the menu is not huge because it relies heavily on good, fresh produce.

We use Caputo flour, imported from Italy, for the dough - this is what makes the pizza great! The best flour for good pizza."

From their humble beginnings in Berwick Street, Pizza Pilgrims now run fifteen branches, with the latest recently opened in Selfridges. All are in London, with the exception of one branch in Oxford. They survived the pandemic by remaining open, and very popular, for takeaways. "It is intense, hard work, but

somehow quite rewarding", Jamahl continues, "staff here are paid more than the average restaurant and the place has a scheme that ensures we take home more, so we are happy!" Prices for pizza start at £8.50 for the Margherita, and the most expensive is the Double Pepperoni with spicy honey for £11.95. That's Jamahl's favourite, and he recommends fresh rocket on the side.

David Gleeson

SURF'S UP IN SOHO

A taste of West Coast sunshine appeared in Soho when Lords of Poké opened last summer.

Marty, a chef by profession, oversees the free-spirited nature and style covering a rotating menu of uncomplicated and imaginative flavour combinations. Bringing together traditional Hawaiian poke with playful Californian-inspired additions.

With an adventure sports background, nature has always been Marty's playground and sits close to his heart.

Lunchtimes are based around a 'build your bowl' menu with a range of super healthy protein, salad, rice and vegetable ingredients. From 5pm it gets more fun as the cocktails come out. From classic margaritas, negronis and espresso martinis to the spicy Picante Pigeon (Jalapeño, grapefruit, lime and tequila), beers and wines. Plus the happy hour from midday to 7pm means it's easy to be adventurous with 2-4-1 drinks.



From an evening menu of hot and cold food, we sampled tasty and tender Kalua Pork Ribs with pineapple kimchi, the best-selling grilled cheese and kimchi sandwich, as well as our own built-bowls. The choice of rice or slaw bases makes them keto-friendly and there are

vegan options with tofu. All fish is sourced by acclaimed sushi specialists, Jōii Sushi, who have their own processing plant and consider all packaging and waste processes thoroughly.

Jason Fisher-Jones

Lords of Poké
64 Old Compton Street,
W1D 4UQ





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NICKIE AIKEN

CONSERVATIVE MP FOR CITIES OF
LONDON & WESTMINSTER



Pedicabs update and my visit to Twentieth Century House

As we approach Spring, we are in a much better place than we were last year. Thanks to our world-leading vaccine roll-out, we are streets ahead in our recovery and are on the path to reclaiming our freedoms from coronavirus. I congratulate and thank the people of Soho for their steadfast efforts.

Soho has always been a community, but if there is one positive to take away from the pandemic, it is the joyous evidence that the community is thriving. People from across Soho have rallied around to support and help each other, especially the most vulnerable during some dark moments.

Firstly, as many of you know, I have been working for the last two years to secure my Pedicabs (London) Private Members' Bill and I have worked incredibly closely with Transport for London and the Department for Transport on the proposals. Sadly, my Bill fell on the 25th February as one MP objected.

I did, however, prepare for this eventuality and have been to see the Prime Minister to discuss pedicab regulation. The Prime Minister fully understood and supported the need to licence and regulate pedicabs in London. As a Westminster resident with a young family himself, he knows first-hand the noise and disruption some pedicab drivers cause. So I was delighted that in answer to my question at Prime Minister's Questions on the 23 February, he confirmed Government time for Pedicab Regulations if my Bill were to fall. I am now liaising with the Leader of the House of Commons, Mark Spencer MP and Chief Whip, Chris Heaton-Harris MP, to confirm when the time will be given. I hope it will

be within the next Parliamentary session which is expected in May.

I would like to pay huge thanks to The Soho Society who have stood shoulder to shoulder with me on this.

Secondly, a number of you have contacted me to raise concerns over the proposed development at Twentieth Century House, Soho Square. I'm sure you're aware that the plans currently propose to demolish the historic building and re-develop the site.

Building on my previous correspondence to the developer, Royal London, where I outlined the views and concerns of local people, I was pleased to be joined by local West End Ward Councillor, Tim Barnes, for a site visit. Together, we raised concerns directly with Royal London and heard more about their plans.

I made my views, as well as those who had contacted me including The Soho Society, known to the developers. I

remain concerned, especially for the impact they will have on Soho Square Studios, the leading audio post-production house immediately next to the site. More work is required and I have requested greater community engagement.

If you haven't already, please do show your support for The Soho Society's petition. More details are further along in this edition.

If you have an issue that you think I may be able to help with, please email me at nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk and keep up to date on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube @TwoCitiesNickie

Photographs courtesy of Nickie Aiken's office.



JONATHAN GLANZ

CONSERVATIVE WARD COUNCILLOR



When I was elected at the By-election in 2009, following the death of former Councillor Ian Wilder, it was really with the hope and expectation, shared by many who take on the role of Councillor, that I would be able to make a difference.

I would like to believe that in the intervening 13 years, I have been successful in some ways in doing so, but, to be candid, my overriding experience has been one of frustration at Councillors' inability to make those differences, given our local and detailed knowledge of our wards.

Crossrail had not started its work when I was elected, but the shadow of blight already crossed the West End, and, at the time of my writing this article, it is still yet to open. I chaired the Community Liaison Groups, both at Tottenham Court Road and at Bond Street, and Crossrail repeatedly assured us that the project was on time and on budget. We were misled.

Throughout my term, we have seen the proliferation of large-scale restaurants in the West End, deliberately creating themselves as destinations, rather than seeking to serve the local community or the tourist market. This has created problems for residents, where the clientele for these restaurants arrive, not by public transport, but in cars which often park double and treble outside or nearby these restaurants, causing misery for those affected.

We have also seen the proliferation of outdoor drinking associated with pubs and restaurants, and lifestyle changes meaning that many of our streets have become like badly-behaved parties.

Throughout my Term, I have tried to support the various attempts to provide a legislative framework to deal with the menace that is Pedicabs. These not only ride around (often on pavements) and charge the unwitting huge sums of money for short journeys, but are often equipped with high-volume speakers blaring out music into the night with no concern for those whose sleep is interrupted.

What all of these issues share is the fact that they are essentially governed by national legislation (or lack of it), and the assumption that many of the well-intentioned changes to liberalise or reduce red tape have unforeseen consequences in the tightly and intensively-used West End, where one size does most definitely not fit all.

As local representatives, we are faced with the consequences of such an approach, and life would be so much better if we had effective and timely powers to make byelaws which apply to the particular circumstances that we have in Westminster, rather than imperfect or inadequate enforcement opportunities.

However, there have been some successes along the way. I was asked to take on the role of Lead Member for Broadband

and Connectivity when Westminster ranked 635th out of 650 Constituencies in the country. Through a co-ordinated effort and facilitation by the Council, we now have one of the best (albeit far from perfect) fibre-enabled systems in the country, and rank in the top 10 Constituencies.

I have also championed Drinking Water Fountains on the basis of their health benefits, and the broader benefits they bring by preventing single-use plastic bottles being shipped into our area and then the cost of their disposal. From Ham Yard to Kingly Court, to Facebook Headquarters, to the new plans for Grosvenor Square, we now have increasing provision.

I also feel that I have been able to help individuals or groups when they have been affected by inappropriate or over-intensive development, and can point to examples across the West End where representations made to Planning Committees have led to refusals or significant additional conditions, improving people's lives.

I have always supported tree planting (in spite of the difficulties that that presents in the West End), and hundreds of trees have been encouraged by me, working both with the Council and with the Westminster Tree Trust, which are making a significant difference to the look and feel of some of our areas. Again, there is always more work to do on these topics.

I also had the privilege to serve as Lord Mayor of the City of Westminster from May 2020 until September 2021. As a result, I was the longest-ever serving Lord Mayor, as my Term was extended in recognition of the fact that Covid had otherwise destroyed the role in its normal sense. I was able to undertake duties over Zoom, Teams, and via podcasts etc, but most of the events which would normally have been part of the Lord Mayoral calendar fell victim to the pandemic.

One thing which did come out during the pandemic was a sense of community, and an upsurge in volunteering, and I very much hope that this will continue, now that the worst of the pandemic seems to be behind us.

It is therefore with mixed feelings that I approach my departure from the Council, as frustration has been punctuated with opportunities to become involved, influence and be aware of aspects of the city, which would not otherwise have happened. I will miss friends and colleagues (across the Chamber), and some of the many competent, hard-working and efficient officers that I have encountered along the way.

I will still be living and working in the West End, so I hope you have not seen the last of me!

PANCHO LEWIS

LABOUR WARD COUNCILLOR



My time as a Soho Councillor

It's been an enormous privilege to represent West End Ward over the past four years.

Soho is a remarkable and extraordinary place — a village that is special because of its unique mix of uses. But above all what makes Soho the place it is, is its community: its residents, market traders, independent business owners, school teachers, religious leaders, among others. It is this extended network of individuals that are at the centre of community life, helping weave the fabric that maintains the Soho village.

I will miss representing the West End on Westminster Council, but am enormously thankful to have had the opportunity to work with people who are so deeply committed to our neighbourhood.

Things we've achieved together

Let's take a moment to recall the things we've achieved since I was elected.

For years, Soho and the wider West End was effectively a one-party state. Westminster Conservatives took Soho for granted, failing to curb the excesses of property development. Worse still, Council chiefs proactively promoted over-development, which severely eroded Soho's heritage and impacted community well-being.

In recent years we have begun to turn the needle. The Council has begun to wake up to the fact that its overly cosy relationship with property developers is intolerable and that Soho demands better. As a result, we've seen significant progress. New measures were introduced to allow for more democratic accountability in the way planning decisions are made. We also successfully lobbied the Council to introduce measures to protect Soho's character: the Council's City Plan now embraces a Soho 'Special Policy Area' which helps protect independent business shop units and in principle guards against large hotel planning applications, among other things.

We've secured other achievements. We forced the Council to U-turn on its decision to severely cut back on opening hours for Marshall Street Leisure Centre. We successfully lobbied to regulate busking. And, after a prolonged battle, we got the Council to go back to the drawing board when it was feared that the al fresco scheme was going to be made permanent without consultation.

Upcoming Council elections: Why I'm asking you to support Labour

It's clear that whilst progress has been made, many issues remain and new problems have emerged.

Following the covid al fresco scheme, trust in the Council is in very short supply. The community has little faith in what Conservatives promise they'll do. Some long-term residents have been driven out of Soho due to excessive noise levels.

To restore trust the Council needs to stop and listen to people's concerns — not brush them aside as if they were mere inconveniences. But this is what they seem intent on doing. They are ploughing ahead with their so-called 'Vision for Soho' which would lead to huge changes to the area, despite deep scepticism about these plans from the community.

This isn't the right way to proceed. Labour candidates have committed to introducing a moratorium on the 'Vision for Soho' plans if they're elected. In its place they'd lead proper and meaningful community conversations and work out how to proceed from there — not impose top-down, divisive plans.

There are other pressing issues. Labour has promised to protect local services. By contrast, the Conservatives seem to want to close them down. It's been revealed that the Council appears to have been quietly planning to close Mayfair library. We will safeguard its long-term viability and that of all libraries. Likewise, we will provide well funded and decent provision of public toilets — another issue the Council have failed on.

The biggest threat to Soho

The most significant threat to Soho is, however, not one single issue. It's bigger than that.

The biggest risk is a return to the politics of the past — a return to Conservative one-party politics. If this happened, little could be done to prevent the Council from reverting to their old ways of taking the community for granted.

Ahead of the local elections in May, ask yourself this question: Do I want a return to the politics of previous decades, where the interests of big business were consistently put before the needs of the community, with very little if any real means of holding the Council to account? Or do I want representatives who will stand up and fight for Soho?

If you want the latter, please support Labour. Candidates Paul FISHER, Patrick LILLEY and Jess TOALE will put the community's interest first, and fight for Soho day in, day out. If we get Labour candidates elected we'd be able to continue that work of turning the needle in the right direction — so that we can continue to work to keep Soho special and protect the remarkable place that the Soho village is.

QUESTIONS TO THE CANDIDATES

Background

- 1** What is your connection to the West End Ward?
- 2** Why do you want to be a Westminster Ward Councillor?
- 3** Which qualities do you value most in your party and its leadership?

Soho Questions

Al Fresco and Vision for Soho

4 The temporary use of Soho's streets for drinking and dining until 11 pm in 2020 and 2021 caused distress to some long term residents with some of them being forced to leave their homes. The proposals for street closures and pavement widening outlined in the Vision for Soho consultation are likely to result in an increase in outdoor drinking and dining activity, leading to more noise and anti-social behaviour particularly at night. Do you support such a substantial and fundamental change to the character of Soho?

5 Do you support or oppose Westminster City Council's plans for the timed closures to vehicle traffic on Bateman and D'Arbly Streets and the extensive pavement widening scheme throughout Soho as set out in its Vision for Soho consultation?

Noise strategy

6 In your view is noise pollution a health issue that the council should recognise? If elected would you seek to ensure the council renews its noise strategy to reflect the World Health Organisation environmental noise guidelines and ensure that council decisions do not lead to those limits being further exceeded? Would you:

(a) support a complete revamp of the council's noise reporting line - by, for example, ensuring the complaints are properly followed up with the person who raised the complaint?

(b) support the installation of environmental noise monitoring equipment in Soho?

Public Toilets in Soho

- 7** If elected would you:
- (a) support a new strategy for public toilets in Soho sufficient to meet demand using permanent and properly staffed facilities rather than temporary toilets?
 - (b) re-open the existing underground toilets and take appropriate measures to prevent antisocial behaviour as was done in the past?

Conservation Area / Refurb of Demolition / Environment

8 Would you support the refurbishment of 20th Century House and oppose its demolition in order to help the council meet its climate change objective of carbon neutrality by 2030?

Waste Management

9 Do you think that the current state of waste management in Soho is acceptable and if not what would you do about it? Would you support a move to waste consolidation and off-street storage for commercial waste rather than the current bags on street policy and, if so, who should pay for it?

Soho Hospital for Women

10 Would you ensure that the Soho Hospital for Women remains primarily in medical use and how would you do so?

Residents and Property Developers and "Gentrification"

11 How much money did your own party receive in donations from the property sector in the last year for which you have data?

12 We often say that the Soho Society is there to support people that live, work and visit in Soho. There are also investors in Soho's commercial property who don't necessarily live, work or visit here - but they do charge rent. Is there a risk that prioritising higher returns on property investment and higher rates might destroy Soho's special character? If so what would you do to protect that character?

Licensing

13 Should the Council grant additional alcohol licences in the cumulative impact zone?

Other

14 Do you support the reduction of the number of vehicle carriageways on Regent Street? Would it have been better to consult on that (allegedly temporary) change? Is it appropriate that the Crown Estate is running the consultation on making the change permanent?

15 How would you encourage more small independent shops to open in Soho?

16 Which causes and community activity would you support?



TIM BARNES

CONSERVATIVE

1 As a Soho regular for over 25 years, I have also lived here for the last four years. Since 2018, I have been proud to represent Soho on Westminster City Council and am the lead councillor for Soho.

2 The last four years have been an extraordinary period in my life and I would like to continue as a Westminster councillor representing Soho to be able to continue that work. It is arguably the busiest representative role in local government anywhere in the country and it's a huge honour to represent the centre of the centre of the greatest city in the world.

Of course, the last two years have been far from typical and much of political life has been taken up with the pandemic and it would be great to have time to tackle more issues faced by those working and living here. We delivered on manifesto promises to raise the "special" status of Soho as a matter of policy in Westminster with the first lead member role and the new Special Policy Area, but there's a lot more that would be possible in more "normal" times.

3 Having been a member of the Conservative Party for over 20 years, there have been several changes of leadership at national and local level. But the consistent elements that I have valued have been there throughout. Overall, it's the focus on helping people to help themselves while looking to best support those that can't, that has appealed to me. Whatever the question, the answer doesn't always have to be "more government".

There's also been unwavering acceptance of the differing views within the broad Conservative tradition that has allowed us to have internal disagreement on some issues without creating internal factions, which is a respectful attitude I truly admire and as a pro-European, that's helped me in the recent past as both party and country have looked to move on.

4 No one should be forced to leave their homes because of changes in local conditions.

The Covid lockdown and the subsequent restrictions created an unprecedented set of circumstances and pressures on many of the restaurants, bars and pubs that are integral to Soho's character. A majority of Soho residents favoured temporary outdoor arrangements to help them come through the crisis and that was also in the supportive nature of Soho.

But it was never intended as a permanent scheme and there are no plans for a return to what was here before and I would not support anything like that.

The final Vision for Soho proposals have not been published so, at the time of writing, we do not quite know what the final proposals

will be. Whatever is put forward, there should be no major changes without the support of a majority of Soho residents, as the Council has already committed to.

5 The three rounds of the co-creation process last year saw hundreds of ideas, comments and proposals submitted and many of those advocated for some of these kinds of measures, with the aim of helping accessibility and more food-led outdoor entertainment. I am against anything that would significantly increase late night vertical drinking.

6(a) I would support a review of the noise strategy, although I don't know what the specific effects of any WHO guidance might be.



The current noise reporting service is not as good as it should be, but I am not sure the noise line is the long-term future. I would like to see noise monitors built into the incident reporting apps that we currently use for reporting other issues, such as FixMyStreet. This would give a record of an incident at the time it was taking place as well as seeking to bring officers to a site after a noise problem may well have ended.

6(b) Yes. I am delighted to see that that idea looks likely to happen following the Vision for Soho process and that the Council will likely look at monitors across Soho.

7(a) New toilet units are being introduced across Soho and the wider West End in the next few months. I would like to see a review once those are in place and open to see where the gaps and issues in provision remain.

7(b) I have lobbied for the underground facilities at Great Marlborough Street to be refurbished and reopened and I am delighted that that is progressing, along with the new above-ground units that will be installed soon on Broadwick Street and around the edges of Soho. The Metropolitan Police remain strongly opposed to the reopening of the underground toilets on Broadwick Street. However, given incidents involving minors and adults in the last twelve months their concerns must be taken seriously.

8 I am on the record as being against any demolition or redevelopment of the 20th Century House site as long as the impact on neighbouring businesses and residents remains intolerably high. That includes issues of noise as well as carbon emissions.

When the proposals were first put forward, I lobbied for the heritage of the building to be acknowledged and the proposals I put forward with Cllr Glanz to retain the façade have been

incorporated in subsequent plans. This is not the best case scenario, but it helps form a new baseline from which the ongoing discussions can develop.

I am continuing to work for a heritage plaque on the building to record the history of the building whatever name and form it might take long in the future, too.

9 Yes, I am in favour of more waste consolidation for commercial and residential properties. It is one of the ways in which we can reduce the need for large waste vehicles in Soho and lower noise and emissions as well as getting bags off pavements. Consolidation of waste, and deliveries, works well in other parts of the West End but it requires space that we don't have on Soho's narrow streets so we need to see it built in to new developments with the costs being picked up as part of those works.

10 Yes. Cllr Jonathan Glanz and myself have previously campaigned for the Soho Hospital to remain in medical use along with retention of a GP service in the extended building complex. We collected signatures for a petition, worked with Nickie Aiken MP and lobbied the NHS. If I am re-elected I will continue to do so. The move of the facilities from Great Chapel Street should help ensure the ongoing level of activity that will justify retention of the site in the eyes of the NHS, and that is to be welcomed.

11 None. Cities of London and Westminster Conservative Association, like all political party organisations, declares donations which are made available via the Electoral Commission website and none have been recorded from developers in the returns that I have seen.

In my time as a councillor, I have never been offered, let alone accepted, any donation or gift from any individual or company connected to the property sector.

12 We need to ensure there is more transparency and a list of ultimate owners of property. The hugely problematic issues on D'Arbly Street and Poland Street, where vaults collapsed, have been made worse by issues identifying those in control and forcing works where needed. This results in long and expensive legal battles that are bad for residents and bad for the Council.

The level of commercial rents is not set or prioritised by the Council. Indeed, we saw a significant decline in West End rents in the last financial year due to Covid and that is a good illustration of what has happened in the wider market, where returns have declined recently.

Higher returns could be brought down by increased supply, but I would not be in favour of that kind of intensification of new building, as it would damage Soho in a great many ways.

13 Soho is not a uniform place. There is some local texture that needs to be considered here. In the most concentrated areas, such as around Old Compton, Greek and Dean Street, we have reached a cumulative level of venues that should not now be made worse, in my view. But there are parts of central and northern Soho where the concentration of venues is much less and there may be more room. Overall, I would like to see the current load spread out more evenly to help manage the impact of licensed premises more effectively, moving things away from areas like Frith and Old Compton Streets.

14 As with many of the temporary measures brought in during the pandemic, there have been good and bad things about the scheme and we have learnt a great deal. As restrictions ease, it makes sense to keep them under review. I would like to see an interim stage where we cut back into the pavement extensions to reintroduce bus stops that would ease the flow of traffic and make it easier for bus users.

There should be a full, formal consultation on any potential permanent changes. The results should be transparent and verifiable, whoever runs it.

15 One of the impacts of lockdown has been the larger proportion of shop units that are vacant than we are used to seeing. That's not good for jobs and local users, but it has meant this is a great moment for new, independent, retailers. The chain Japanese restaurant on the corner of D'Arbly Street and Wardour Street has recently become a new independent hairdresser for example (sadly of little use to me!).

The council has supported half a dozen pop-up shops across the West End in the last year and the new brands they showcase. It would be great to see some of those moving into the vacant units in the coming months.

Within planning, I have also been an advocate for smaller retail units. Many chains look for larger formats to support their standard models, so restrictions in size can make it easier for new independent shops, as we see on Berwick Street, for example.

In 2019, I also worked up a scheme to bring in a complete exemption to business rates for independent, grass-roots music venues, such as the 100 Club. It has made a huge difference to their long-term prospects and ability to operate and I hope it helps seed other independent venues and shops, too.

16 I have been delighted to attend and support events such as the Soho Fete and the Food Feast and hope to see those prosper long into the future.

But it has been a concern for me that there is a lack of live music, arts and performance and I have been working with a small number of local organisations to develop a programme of activity late this summer that would very much be in the spirit of Soho... watch this space!





EOGHAIN LEO MURPHY

CONSERVATIVE

1 Currently I represent part of the new-boundary West End Ward as a councillor. I have lived in the West End Ward since 2012 and before that lived nearby from 2005. I joined the Soho Society several years ago, am a long-standing member of a Soho drinking club and I am a regular attendee of a church in Soho (Warwick Street).

2 I was drawn into local politics through personal connections and only joined the Conservatives when I joined the local ward committee, impressed at the cost-effective service provided by Westminster City Council. I stood for and was elected to Westminster City Council in 2018 and have enjoyed the engagement it gives with the local community. I have found it demanding in time and energy but have recently retired from full-time work giving me more time and focus for a ward as busy and engaging as West End.

3 The leadership of Westminster City Council has an admirable focus on cost-effective provision of excellent and responsive public services to our community; safe and clean streets; clean air and lowering carbon emissions. Westminster is rightly regarded as one of the best administrations in London and across the country.

4 No, I do not believe there should be an increase in outdoor drinking or dining except where a majority supports it. Anti-social behaviour and substantial and fundamental changes to the character of Soho are more impacted by drinking than by dining, but both can have a substantial detrimental effect, especially with larger premises.

5 Timed traffic restrictions and pavement widenings may be desirable for resident and visitor amenity and safety, including for the benefit of the school pupils, but these should only be put in place in close consultation with residents, and I would oppose them if I felt that sufficient community consent was not there.

6(a) Yes, I absolutely recognise the problems of noise pollution and its potentially substantial ill-effects on quality of life, and would work to ensure the council is at the forefront of tackling it. I have myself taken action on plant noise where I live with the assistance of the council's environmental health team.

6(b) Yes, and I am frankly disappointed to hear this has not always been the case. When I reported excessive, regular extractor noise near the rear of my flat I was visited and I corresponded directly with council officers, who helped resolve the matter. Similar follow-up should occur for one-off issue reporting.

7(a) I have raised this matter firmly, twice, at recent council scrutiny committees and written to the cabinet member for city

management. In the response, he has assured me that enabling works for permanent street-level automated public conveniences will begin next month in both Broadwick Street and Princes Street (just across Regent Street).

There needs to be reconsideration of the extent of provision of permanent facilities to reduce ongoing reliance on temporary units which do nothing to enhance the environment. I have also demanded this in my letter.

7(b) The intention is to reopen the underground Great Marlborough Street facility once it can be refurbished adequately. This was confirmed in response to my recent letter to the cabinet member.



8 In general, I support refurbishment over demolition and, as an existing member of a planning sub-committee, am delighted that this preference at last forms part of planning regulation that we implement following the recent formal adoption of the new City Plan.

As for 20th Century House, I have not visited the building and am not party to sufficient information to give a full assessment. However I think that the heritage aspects, environmental implications and immediate neighbourhood impacts (residents and the adjacent sound studio) should be properly assessed, and the matter considered genuinely in the round.

9 Consolidation and off-street storage is certainly preferable for commercial waste but this requires the co-operation of various leaseholders which has proved easier to achieve in areas

with a single landlord with consistent leases, such as on New Bond Street, but I would happily support and actively encourage an initiative towards this.

In the roll-out of residential food waste recycling to West End over the summer, it should be synchronised with commercial food waste, so this should avoid additional collections.

Regarding other residential collections, we might reflect on whether three collections per day is the optimal configuration as it means a longer period of legitimate bags on streets.

10 Yes, I campaigned for the NHS practice when it was under threat a few years ago and consider it important to keep the NHS presence in Soho Square. I attended the Covid clinic there myself during the pandemic. I am delighted that the Great Chapel Street practice for the homeless is moving in as it will help ensure a continuing NHS presence there.

11 I currently sit on a planning subcommittee but have not received any offer of gifts, donations or received any information or instructions on this whatever.

12 Yes, whilst the whole of Westminster has a challenge from rising commercial rents forcing a change in character, this is especially acute in Soho Village. The restricting of redevelopment possibilities here in both planning and licensing – through the new Special Policy Area and extended Cumulative Impact Zone – should help and this must be monitored, and these measures amended, as proves necessary.

13 I am delighted the Cumulative Impact Zone has recently been extended and should not personally like to see an increase in alcohol licences in the area.

14 The reduction of carriageways causes stop-start movement behind buses and a consequent deterioration in air quality. This is unsatisfactory and I consider that the bus-stop bays need to be restored to allow continuous flow of private vehicles. We can

then look at fresh traffic flow data to see if further carriageways are required.

I also personally think the planters need to be replaced or moved to reflect better the classical style of Regent Street; they give the appearance now of random placement.

15 It's important to shop locally to support independent shops and encourage others, and I would happily help lead a campaign on this.

16 I would like to support provision of disabled access to St Anne's Gardens along with the replacement of the railings with more elegant ones reflecting the character of the area. I appreciate this has already been looked at, and found challenging given the height of the gardens, but a solution and funding surely can be found.



JULIE REDMOND

CONSERVATIVE

1 I have lived in Marylebone and worked in the West End for nearly 20 years. I got married and had a family here. The West End defines my experience of London. I love the area's vibrancy and diversity; but I am also aware of its challenges. I have played an active part in the West End community for many years. I have been a committee member of the Marylebone Association [the Marylebone equivalent to The Soho Society] for the last four years. I also ran a West End Mums and Dads support group which had over 2000 members. More recently, I became a WCC Health Champion for the West End and volunteered as a Covid Vaccinator for West End residents during the pandemic.

2 When my son was born seven years ago, I started to spend a lot more time in the community. As I watched and observed local residents and businesses, I started to become more aware of the complexity of the West End environment and the needs of the people who call it their home. Ultimately, I decided that becoming a councillor was the best way to make a difference. I know there is a lot that needs to change. However, rather than sit on the sidelines worrying I think that change only happens if people take responsibility for fixing things themselves. I therefore decided not to return to work but to stand as a councillor to try and make a difference myself.

3 I am really motivated by the Conservative Party's vision of Build Back Better. This practical problem solving and results driven sort of policy really makes sense to me. I believe the party's unwavering commitment to protecting and maximising the opportunities available to the people of the United Kingdom is also very inspiring.

4 Soho's unique character is defined by its long-term residents, so anything which forces them to leave their homes is a real concern. The proposal for street closures and pavement widening outlined in the Vision for Soho are designed to make the area a better place for people. However, I am acutely aware of the need

to listen to the voices of Soho residents, and would not support any change without everyone being happy with the results of the detailed consultation process. I think all parts of the consultation and Vision for Soho need to be considered, you cannot look at one individual part in isolation. Ultimately, this may mean that decisions need to be made on a street-by-street basis to ensure that the balance between Soho business and residents' quality of life is maintained.

5 If the proposals are implemented with due regard for residents' concerns, I think they could address the imbalance between pedestrian and vehicle traffic through the area that the Vision for soho plan refers to. If any changes are ultimately implemented, I think they must be accompanied by measures to address the issues of noise and anti-social behaviour that the Soho Society has raised. I also think that WCC should have the courage to reverse decisions and reopen streets if more issues do arise in practice.

6 The management of noise pollution should be a key focus for WCC going forward. This is very important for me as both I and my family have suffered from sleep deprivation as a result of parties and anti-social behaviour in the area over the last few years. Last summer, I conducted my own noise survey in Soho with a monitoring machine and found levels that exceeded the recommended WHO noise guidelines for a good night's sleep. Having spoken to many residents over the last six months, I am also aware of how widespread this issue is and share the Soho Society's concerns as to the irreparable damage to the character of the area it may cause. For these reasons, I would personally support all of these suggestions to make sure the residents know they have WCC's full support in managing this critical issue.

7 As the West End has now fully reopened it is clear to me that Soho public toilet strategy needs an urgent review to ensure it remains fit for purpose. I am aware of the calls for the provision of staffed toilets and reopening of the underground facilities some of

which are not fit for purpose. However, these need to be balanced against concerns of cost and public safety. Alongside any further decisions that are taken on these facilities, WCC already has a robust plan for the refurbishment and retrofitting of automated toilets. This means that these essential services can be delivered to the community quicker and at a lower cost and will help with our cleaner and greener agenda to reuse and recycle.

8 I have listened to the concerns of local residents over the proposed development and share their worries as to the impact to the local area that its demolition would have. For this reason, concerns around carbon neutrality and the aesthetic appeal of the building itself I would support refurbishment over demolition every time!

9 Having joined the WCC pest control team for a day on the streets, I am very much aware of the public health hazards that waste can create. I would support a consolidation and off-street storage policy (for example of the type outlined in the Vision for Soho) and share the current councillors' frustrations as to hold-ups in implementation whilst new legislation is enacted. Ultimately, I think single provider solutions to waste management services are the way forward.

10 As a nurse, this is an area I would really like to help with if I get elected. I am a strong supporter of community based and face-to-face health care and believe we should retain and enhance existing centres like The Soho Hospital for Women wherever possible. In the end, the decision will lie in the hands of the local NHS trust. However, I would welcome further engagement by WCC with the NHS trust. Given the levels of current need it would be great if a commitment to continued healthcare use on this site could be secured.

11 At this stage I don't have this information I am afraid.

12 Sensitive development by commercial property investors has the potential to bring great benefits to the area both in terms of raising the quality of the built environment and through the contributions to community infrastructure that they will make. However, this is also a question of achieving the right balance. It is the job of the planning system to ensure these competing interests are properly weighed up. I would encourage a clearer formulation of what goes to make up Soho's character so that we are protecting the right things. The recent decision to stop the replacement of historic gas lamps is a good example of the need to preserve before heritage is lost.

13 Any further licensing applications in the cumulative impact zone should be very carefully considered. Given local residents' concerns with noise pollution, anti-social behaviour and waste, I would also encourage the rigorous review of all conditions attached to current alcohol licences and a much tougher line taken on enforcement.

14 Given the levels of congestion that it has created, I have real reservations about the decision to reduce carriageways on Regent Street. I understand why the decision was taken to implement the temporary change without consultation. However, I think it is vital that WCC listens to residents' voices when considering whether to make the change permanent. Regent Street has evolved throughout its history and the Crown Estate has proved an effective custodian in the past. However, given the impact of the changes I do believe that WCC should ensure that the community is at the heart of the consultation process.

15 I am a big fan of independent retailers and love the fact that Soho has been the launchpad for many new creative businesses. I would like WCC to work with both Soho residents and property owners to actively promote new retailers in the area and support pop-ups and short term lets through the planning system. Driving change in this area will require more proactive policy making. When we talk about Soho's special character the diversity and originality of its retail offering is one of the first things that springs to mind. It would be great if changes could be made to the current business rate system to support this.

16 Mental health is a big priority for me. The last few years have left many people feeling lonely and isolated. Addiction and dependency issues have increased and there has been a really worrying upturn in domestic violence and abuse. I want to work with WCC to help the community rebuild. As a Health Champion, I am already talking to WCC about implementing a community healthcare scheme in the West End to offer in-home outreach and support. There are also some amazing examples of charities working in the area to bring people together and tackle these issues. WCC should throw its support behind these charities and do what it can to help them connect with the most vulnerable in our community.





PAUL FISHER LABOUR

1 For several years I lived in Covent Garden - I am a member of the Covent Garden Area Trust and was once a trustee. Whilst living in Covent Garden I spent much of my free time specifically in Soho, which was in my 'backyard'. The West End and its villages represent all that I have come to love about London: its diversity, dynamism and creativity.

2 I want to be an advocate for our local communities. The villages of London's West End need strong voices in the Council now more than ever. This is particularly true in Soho where the Council consistently fails to protect heritage buildings like 20th Century House or take action on the noise (from various sources) that has for a long time been keeping families up at night. The Conservative Council often looks at the ward's extraordinary economic productivity but fails to look beyond the numbers and take note of the residents who live here (...until election time). Representing the interests of the West End on the Council - standing up for preserving its history and securing a future for residents here - would be a real privilege.

3 Integrity and a commitment to change through community activism. The Labour Party under Keir Starmer every day looks like the party I want to see in local and national government. It is a campaigning party that places great emphasis on local activism. The contrast with Boris Johnson's Conservatives could not be starker. That is true at the national level, but I am afraid it is also true in our local council. We have to restore confidence and trust in our politics. That is completely inconsistent with Boris Johnson's continued leadership of our country (and the very vocal support for his leadership from Westminster Council Conservatives).

4 No. We must get the balance between Soho's interests (its residents and its local businesses) right. At present, the scales have been tipping excessively against residents. That is not the fault of business. It is the fault of the Council, which has a duty to preserve the interests of residents whilst maintaining the vibrant, dynamic Soho we know and love. How do you get that right? We need to rigorously police the new Neighbourhood Plan for a start, which prioritises businesses that support local communities (convenience stores, cafes and the like) over and above excessive restaurants and bars.

5 My starting position is that there should be no pedestrianisation without strong justification and proper consultation. At first sight, this appears to be a movement towards the de facto pedestrianisation of large parts of Soho. The widening of

pavements is clearly an attempt to expand al fresco dining at the expense of the public realm. We must ensure that any such plans are undertaken in meaningful consultation with local residents or they must not be undertaken at all.

6 I am very much in favour of clamping down on excessive noise in Soho which has caused many sleepless nights for local families. Part of that strategy involves the Council making good on its commitments (extracted by Cllr Pancho Lewis and the Soho Society) to undertake proper and effective noise monitoring so that it can see for itself the scale of the problem it needs to address. The WHO guidelines are a good starting point and it is only logical that complaints are followed up with the individual complainant.



7 Public toilet provision in Soho is in dire need of improvement. At present, the lack of sufficient toilets in the village poses a health hazard and a nuisance to residents and businesses alike. I would support a new strategy for permanent and properly staffed toilet facilities. That may include re-opening pre-existing underground facilities. However, any such strategy must also involve working with police in the locality to issue on-the-spot fines to people who abuse Soho's hospitality.

8 The Labour Action Team supports the default setting within the neighbourhood plans across the West End which is to avoid demolition wherever possible due to its harmful environmental effects and the destruction of heritage. We are against the demolition of 20th Century House. But we are also

against the 'facadism' that has emerged in recent years which seeks to justify the gutting of heritage interiors for the sake of commercial interests. Campaigns to preserve buildings like 20th Century House are indeed about environmentalism, but they are also about preserving what makes Soho special: its history.

9 The Council has taken too lax an approach to the dumping of commercial waste. As is so often the case, the key to combating waste is enforcement and making sure that the Council commits resources to tackling the build-up of waste on our streets. I am interested in exploring all avenues to help businesses who want to keep waste off our streets. Off-street storage facilities should be considered as part of any such strategy.

10 Labour in Westminster has a strong record of protecting hospitals and GP practices. We are the party of the NHS. A good example of this is the work done by my fellow candidate Patrick Lilley to preserve Hyde Park's GP practice in Connaught Village when it was threatened with closure. We would support

a concerted campaign making it plain that the hospital is valued locally and essential to many patients. Sustained pressure on the Council has yielded results in the past. It is key to securing the Soho Hosoptial for Women for the future.

11 Although we do not have ready access to data on the source of donations to the national Labour Party, we are adamantly opposed to property development money finding its way into our campaign and we can say hand-on-heart that no such money has been used to finance the local Labour Action Team campaign in the West End. It is also worth noting that a report from Transparency International found that 75% of all gifts and hospitality received by London councillors between 2010 and 2018 were reported by councillors in Westminster. With 68% of the total being reported by just two Conservative councillors. Where there is a problem with commercial interests in local government here in Westminster, it lies squarely with the Conservative party.

12 Soho has for too long seen the ever-encroaching commercialisation that destroys local businesses in return for a quick profit. A key part of preserving Soho's local character is making sure that the local neighbourhood plans are enforced. Where there is to be a change of use in commercial premises the plans propose prioritising outlets that are of use to the local community (local convenience stores and local businesses). The Soho plan was ratified by local residents in a referendum in September 2021. We are committed to making sure that the plan is not ignored by the Council. In addition, we will keep lobbying Westminster Council to speak with their colleagues in government about the deregulation of use classes in 2020, which potentially threatens and conflicts with the local plans on this issue.

13 It is difficult to see how the granting of new alcohol licences in the Cumulative Impact Zone is either a necessity for the West End (which is saturated with licensed venues) or consistent with the health of local residents. The Licensing Act 2003 includes provisions for cumulative impact assessments (CIAs). These CIAs can and should be taken into account to limit the growth of licences where the licensing objectives (the prevention of crime, public safety, prevention of public nuisance and protection of children) are being compromised. We have real concerns about granting additional alcohol licences in the CIZ. The bar to granting new

alcohol licences within the CIZ must be high to prevent local residents being overwhelmed by the commercialisation of Soho and the noise disruption that this brings. At present - on paper - there is a policy presumption against granting new licences within the CIZ subject to limited exceptions. That presumption is not being followed as a matter of fact. It needs to be enforced and policed rigorously by the Council. I will make protecting the CIZ from harmful licensing a key priority during my term as a councillor, if given the opportunity to represent the West End.

14 I have always been against the introduction of pedestrianisation measures where there is no proper assessment of dispersal, the potential for congestion on surrounding streets and the need for streets for deliveries in areas such as Soho. For these reasons, the local Labour Action Team opposed the plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street in 2018. We will continue to oppose any further plans for the reduction of carriageways (and effective pedestrianisation in the ward - particularly on Regent Street and the Oxford Circus piazza) before the Council undertakes proper consultation with residents.

15 Local councillors need to become 'brand ambassadors' for the villages. Soho has so much to offer residents, businesses and visitors alike, but only insofar as it retains its unique offering. We want to start a campaign that focuses on the diversity of local businesses in Soho that will make use not just of the Council but social media and public events to showcase local producers and suppliers.

16 There are so many local causes and community activities with which we as a team are currently engaging; from promoting women's safety and combating anti-social behaviour, through to action on homelessness. Personally, I would want to see a campaign to improve social housing and call out bad landlords within Soho. A recent response to a FOIA request submitted by The Soho Society identifies that a third of housing in Soho is social housing. I would very much like to be involved in engaging local residents to campaign for proper retrofitting and refurbishment of properties desperately in need of development. I have also already mentioned the need for a licensing policy that works for residents, which will be a key part of my term as a councillor, if elected.



JESSICA TOALE

LABOUR

1 I live in Covent Garden and spend most of my time in the West End. I first worked here after finishing my Masters. My husband and I had our first date here. And it was always the first place I would visit on trips back to London when I was living overseas. I'm honoured to call myself a West End resident and also regularly write for two local magazines: the My Soho Times and The Covent Gardener.

2 Of all the places I've lived, the West End is the one that feels most like home. Being here during the pandemic deepened my ties to the area and the many amazing people that call it home. I want to be a West End ward councillor to be a champion for the area, to advocate for the community and help address the issues we all face. For too long the community has been misunderstood

by both the Council and visitors to the area. I want to work with you to ensure that Soho remains a great place to live.

3 The Labour Party's membership card reads: "by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve much more than we do alone". For me co-operation is at the heart of how we achieve common aims and get the best out of everyone for the benefit of everyone - whether that is within our communities, our country or globally. Keir Starmer as leader has consistently demonstrated integrity and has a public service ethos that I admire.

4 No. Soho's charm comes from its finely balanced mix of residents, businesses and visitors. And the vibrancy that comes from these mixed uses is what many residents love.

However, al fresco upset this balance and had an unacceptable impact on residents' lives. Vision for Soho's proposals are a thinly veiled attempt to bring back al fresco by stealth. Instead, Soho's future should be guided by the Neighbourhood Plan, and I would back a special policy area to protect creative industries in Soho.

5 I would oppose these plans for Bateman and D'Arblay Streets. Residents have told me about the difficulties they faced during al fresco caused by street closures – including from noise, street fouling and difficulty accessing their front doors. People who work on these streets have also complained about the disruption. Instead, plans for the future of these streets need to be drawn up in tandem with residents and through genuine, rather than superficial, consultation.

6 We understand the impact that excessive noise is having on the quality of life of residents – and I have experienced myself the nuisance of noisy pedicabs and outdoor revelry. The West End Labour Team has already advocated for, and got the Council to agree to install proper noise monitoring in Soho. The Council needs to follow up on this commitment and ensure that noise is not excessive and in line with the WHO guidelines. Monitoring is the first step in this process. Ensuring that its noise team is properly resourced to respond to issues raised by residents should happen in tandem.

7 Absolutely. Labour has been calling for properly staffed public toilet provision, with regular cleaning and access 24 hours a day. A starting point is reopening facilities that have recently been closed. There is no cutting corners on this issue and the Council needs a properly joined up strategy with the police and local businesses to address the problem of street fouling.

8 I have signed and shared the Soho Society's petition to prevent 20th Century House from being demolished. The Council appears all too willing to allow heritage buildings to fall by the wayside in favour of commercial interests. And if the Council took its environmental commitments seriously, it wouldn't allow buildings like 20th Century House to face the threat of demolition when refurbishment would be a suitable alternative.

9 Across the West End rubbish dumping is an issue which the Council hasn't got a handle on. There needs to be greater enforcement of collection times and businesses should have waste disposal strategies in place – including having off street storage facilities.

10 Yes. The Soho Hospital for Women is a vital asset to the community. We would support a campaign to continue its Asset of Community Value status and seek to expand its services. Further, Labour has a plan to create a 15-minute city, and access to service like healthcare is a core part of that plan.

11 The West End Labour candidates have not received any money or hospitality from the property sector. We stand firmly against the influence that property developers have on

local government in Westminster, and in particular on the Conservative Party.

12 As I have said, I would back efforts to support and protect Soho's unique character and its role as a creative industries hub. I would back a special policy area in Soho and ensure the priorities in the Soho Neighbourhood Plan are supported. I am also working with representatives of residents and creative industry businesses to determine how we champion and protect the local character of the area, ensuring it has a future. The rampant commercialisation of Soho and rising rents are already having an impact on local and independent businesses. Moves to bring back al fresco would exacerbate the risk they face of being driven out.

13 Having seen the impact of the proliferation of late-night venues and alcohol led establishments on the lives of residents in Soho, I have serious reservations about the issue of new alcohol licences in the cumulative impact zone. Soho already has almost 25% of Westminster's unique licensed locations, and

the Council should exercise its right to refuse licenses in this area far more frequently than it does. The bar should be set very high for any new licences in the CIZ and in my view should only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

14 I do not support the reduction of the number of carriageways on Regents Street. As we have seen this has caused traffic blockages which contribute to air pollution issues in Soho and have seriously hindered the access of emergency vehicles. We are seeing too many 'temporary' changes pushed through without consultation with the people who will be most affected. For the same reasons, I am worried about the impact the proposed pedestrianisation of Oxford Street might have and oppose this.

15 We absolutely need to protect independent shops in Soho. I would be a champion for independent businesses and would support the revitalisation of Berwick Street Market as an essential amenity for residents and local businesses. Further, Labour nationally has plans to reform business rates, which would incentivise businesses to move into empty premises to revive high streets, and access to essential shops as well as services is part of Labour in Westminster's 15-minute city plan.

16 I am already working to take action on issues that matter to you. I am an advocate for women's safety, engaging with the police, planners and lighting experts to improve street safety. I am working with residents and the creative industries to address misconceptions about the community that lives and works in Soho and to help them to build a shared vision for the future which preserves the area's unique character. I also volunteer with a local homelessness charity. I would further like to support efforts to revitalise Berwick Street Market, to preserve essential community assets and heritage buildings and to tackle anti-social behaviour and noise.





PATRICK LILLEY

LABOUR

1 I was first selected to stand in 2018 and missed being elected by 27 votes. Since then, I have spoken with thousands of West End residents. I campaigned to save the Curzon Mayfair in as well as helping Berwick Street Market traders defeat Council plans to privatise the market.

2 What has Westminster Council done to increase residential amenity in the last four years? I want to ensure three Labour Councillors continue the work done by the first Labour Councillor, Pancho Lewis. I would like to bat for residents and improve residential amenity. I do not believe we need any new liquor licences, but we definitely do not need more late ones! I want a diverse neighbourhood both in terms of residents, housing and business not for the area to be swamped by food and beverage and liquor. I will campaign for business rates reform to revive our Soho high streets and I was an early advocate of a freeze in Council tax in Westminster until 2024.

3 Keir Starmer is decisive, competent, and trustworthy. He has shown strong leadership within Labour, and he has behaved like a statesman throughout the crises we have witnessed like Covid and Ukraine.

4 No. The plans envisaged by Vision For Soho simply will not make residents' lives better. We all want the area to continue to be a hugely prosperous part of Westminster and London's economy but not to the detriment of residents' health. I do not support facilitating fundamental change to the character of Soho with their VFS plan.

5 We oppose these plans for Bateman and D'Arblay Streets. D'Arblay Street has been plagued by roadworks and disruption for years and the Council didn't see fit to solve them. Sadly, the Vision for Soho "consultation" could really have been so much better. All streets of Soho need to comply with World Health Organisation noise level standards. I have been told by residents on D'Arblay Street and many other places that al fresco noise was unbearable. And the Council and their property developer mates want more.

6 Noise pollution IS a real health issue. Tory Councillors have toed the party line and ignored it. Yes, Westminster needs an updated Noise Strategy. It was Labour's Councillor Pancho Lewis who finally got a commitment out of Westminster Council to look at sound monitoring. City Inspectors should be able to ensure that WHO standards are adhered to and have real back-up from high management and police. In addition to a reference number residents should get written feedback. This should not be party political. Kensington and Chelsea have recently installed noise monitoring cameras. I applaud them. Camden has used Public Sector Protection orders. I applaud them too. Let's leave no stone unturned.

7 It is vital for our health and for a successful business and tourist environment to have clean and staffed public conveniences. We need enforcement of laws about street fouling. It is disgusting how parts of Soho have resembled an open air urinal (and worse) during alfresco. Weekends now are no better. Even telephone boxes are turning into improvised toilets. I support a tourist tax on Airbnb and hotels that could be used to invest in public toilets and clamping down on ASB and enforcing laws around all of this.

8 The Soho Society AGM featured a presentation on the stupidity of demolition. There is a difference of 9.6 million tonnes of CO2 between refurbishment and demolish/rebuild. I have chipped in to help promote the TSS petition about this. At present there is

20% VAT on refurbishments but no VAT on new build. I would campaign to have this reversed to promote a real green agenda.

9 If elected I would promote waste consolidation and vastly reduce the number of companies involved in waste management in Soho. Soho needs a waste consolidation unit particularly to do away with the very noisy bottle collections. This has been done by The Crown Estate for their Regent Street portfolio. In Soho this needs to involve the large freeholders working together with the Council. It is in everyone's interests to do away with noisy bottle collections and waste on the street.

Regarding other residential collections, we might reflect on whether three collections per day is the optimal configuration as it means a longer period of legitimate bags on streets.

10 I strongly support the retention of the existing dental, pharmacy and GP services and will campaign to have their past services reinstated including chiropody. It is a great space for community meetings too. I was involved in earlier campaigns to save the GP surgeries and, like many residents, I have been a patient here. We need to renew the Asset of Community Value status when it is due to expire on 8/11/2023.

11 Locally zero. No bought influence. Labour selections are done only by party members who live in the West End ward. To be a Labour candidate/councillor you have to live in Westminster. I think "gentrification" is a complicated term but has come to mean social cleansing and demolishing older social housing stock replacing it with expensive properties, but as regards other parties' close connections to property developers that is for them to answer. The number of gifts taken by one or two Westminster Conservative Councillors is in the public domain and remains truly shocking.

12 I support long overdue business rates reform and reasonable commercial rent levels. Under current legislation rent reviews are upward only. I would support reforms which enable rents to reflect actual market circumstances i.e., can go up or down.

13 No.

14 As Regent Street is in the public not private realm then any consultation should be done by the Council. The Regent Street pavements were already wide and did not need any further widening, and this has caused an increase in emissions due to vehicle log jams.

15 In property where the Council is the freeholder (e.g., Berwick Street) I would encourage the Council's property department to press for specialist user clauses and rental levels that independent shops might be able to afford. If elected, I will encourage the large freeholders to give preference to independent retailers because that is what Soho is about. Because liquor licensed premises command high rents this puts pressure on small independent retailers.

16 I will insist that Westminster City Council consult residents honestly, a request that has already been made by the Westminster Amenity Societies Forum (representing almost 30 local societies). I am calling for the Mayfair Public Library to be listed as an Asset of Community Value, like the Soho Walk in Health Centre. I will campaign to stop London being used as a world class centre for money laundering. My overriding aim is to reverse the decline in residential amenity over recent years and improve the quality of life for residents.

THE PROPERTY CONNECTION

Property Companies and their links to Westminster City Council

Soho is unique in the country in the intensity of property development in a tiny area in which over 2,600 people live and 80,000 people work. Although it's great to live in an area that is this vibrant there are inevitable downsides to the intensity of development in terms of noise, endless construction, loss to the Soho Conservation Area and changes in land use as residents and retail move out and hotels, bars and restaurants move in, creating a monoculture of food and beverage businesses at ground level. The council plays the key

role in this - as all planning and licensing applications are decided by its committees.

It is crucial that the ward councillors we vote for are willing and able to speak up for residents in this debate often against very powerful interests, such as the commercial property companies, developers and their agents.

One serious concern is that the property companies have both the incentive and the resources to influence the council's decisions in ways that are not transparent - so that decision making is opaque and excludes the voices of those people who are going to be most directly impacted by these decisions. Planning and licensing decisions have a permanent impact on land use and the built environment, so if you get it wrong the you have to live with the consequences for a very long time indeed.

Is there any evidence to justify such a concern? Just to be clear, we must stress that we have no evidence of criminal

activity and there is no suggestion here that that has taken place. However, influence on decision making takes many forms which may be perfectly legal and legitimate but which excludes from the process those whose voices should be heard.

We have had two hotels approved by the council apparently in direct contradiction to the council's own policy: the new hotel on the corner of Broadwick Street and Berwick Street, on height (it is eight storeys, two storeys higher than policy permits) and the hostel on Dean Street on the number of rooms (over 700 'pods' so not a small hotel). We also have proposals for outdoor dining which appear to us to be in direct contradiction to the council's own cumulative impact policy on licensing. All these decisions help businesses and property companies and have a very significant impact on their profitability, whilst they often have very significant adverse consequences for residents. The council often says it likes to listen to residents but on these and other issues it's not listening very well. Last year, the heads of every Amenity Society in Westminster wrote to the Leader of the Council to point out that consulting with residents was not working.

So is there any evidence that suggests that property companies and their agents have too much influence over the council and is the mechanism by which that influence is exerted silencing some voices?

We have two previous conservative ward councillors, both well liked by voters, who did speak up for residents but they are no longer ward councillors. This is what they said when they left:-

Paul Church (CON West End Ward councillor 2014 to 2018):

"I tried to stand up for the communities I was elected to represent against the dominance of property developers

COMMUNITY CHEST
Planning Permission granted for new hotel.
Collect £500.



and their agents, patronage and power in Westminster, but I was bullied, silenced & threatened by their powerful allies. Local government shouldn't be like this."

Glenys Roberts (CON West End Ward 1999 to 2018):

"I resigned from the Council and the Tory party. I tried to stand up for the residents against vested interests only to be marginalised and worse, but I was able to tell them some home truths that have come to haunt them, namely they would lose seats to Labour because everyone had had enough..."

Paul's specific concern was that Conservative party selection committees tasked with choosing who should stand for the party in council elections is made up not just of residents but also business interests including property company interests.

In 2018 Paul said,

"The local Conservative Association in Westminster has different rules to the rest of the UK, which means you don't have to live in the ward to join the local committee. So lots of developer reps tend to join them".

He claimed property developers are influencing executive committees that pick Conservative candidates standing for election.

"Westminster's Conservative Association rules differ from the national party regulations that bar outsiders from sitting on local selection committees."

We put these issues to the local Conservative Association and a spokesperson responded:

"The suggestion that representatives of property developers, or indeed property developers themselves, have any influence on CLWCA's selection processes is completely incorrect. Only individuals who are members of the Conservative Party can participate in the process, which consists of three stages. This includes an initial interview stage involving senior members of the Association and sitting councillors, a ward-specific application review stage to sift out weak applicants, and a final stage interview undertaken by the Ward Committee. The groups involved in these three stages are different,



"The set-up in Westminster has allowed "reps" of property developers to vote for candidates."



"For too long senior colleagues found it easier to have a drink with the rich and well connected than stand up for residents' concerns."

which makes any inappropriate influence impossible. For the West End Ward, applicants were interviewed at the final stage by the members of the Ward Committee, which consists of 23 individuals, eliminating the impact of any

one voice. None of those 23 individuals is employed by a development company. The Association is delighted that three phenomenal candidates have been selected to fight for the ward in May.

COMMUNITY CHEST
Demolition of historic building approved.
Advance to Go.

Councillor Tim Barnes has been a champion of local issues and worked tirelessly on behalf of residents over the last four years; the same can be said of Councillor Eoghain Murphy, who currently represents the Bryanston & Dorset Square ward, which is being eliminated following the ward boundary review; and finally Julie Redmond, a much-liked and respected local resident, former A&E nurse, and committee member of the Marylebone Association."

While this is a robust response it does not address the specific question we put - are business interests involved in the selection process for Conservative

ward candidates in Westminster? Neither is the association prepared to make a copy of its rules public. The answer does confirm that none of the people on the selection committees were employed directly by a development company. We leave you to draw your own conclusion.

It is really important that the Council keeps a healthy distance between its decision makers and the property industry with its powerful financial interests and is also seen to do so. Let's hope that our new Ward Councillors will have the freedom to speak out for residents and speak truth to power wherever that power lies.

Tim Lord



CHANCE
Stuck in traffic on Regent Street.
Go back three space

MATTHEW BENNETT

RETIRING CHAIR OF THE SOHO SOCIETY PLANNING COMMITTEE

Have you heard the news? Piccadilly Circus is to be demolished, with high rise blocks taking the place of the historic buildings and neon advertising hoardings. Traffic will be rerouted under Shaftesbury Avenue and the buildings on either side replaced with high level pedestrian walkways. The destruction doesn't just stop there either, with much of Soho earmarked for an appointment with the wrecking ball, its bustling narrow streets, famous the world over, to be lost forever. Mercifully this act of vandalism, proposed in the late 1960's and early 70's, that would have erased the heritage, culture and community of this part of Central London, never saw the light of day. It was thwarted by a then 26-year-old resident, named Matthew Bennett who, with his activist friends, formed the Save Piccadilly Campaign. It signalled the beginning of a lifetime association with Soho and an area that he's selflessly served over the last 50 years.

Matthew was born in Berkshire and lived in Hook until the age of 17, before arriving in Soho in 1967. He was teaching English as a Foreign Language at International House, living in a student flat share in Denman Street and generally enjoying life in London. However, the peace was shattered when he discovered plans for the demolition and redevelopment of Piccadilly and the surrounding area, his own flat included! An understandable sense of outrage prevailed and Matthew, not one to stand back whilst events took their course, formed the Save Piccadilly Campaign with some of his friends. Peter Boizot, the founder of Pizza Express, was the Vice-Chair and Ed Berman, a seasoned campaigner, was Chair. This group of committed activists took on the developers behind the Piccadilly scheme, eventually scoring a major victory. As Matthew recalls, 'It was an energising experience becoming involved with like-minded people, all determined to preserve Soho; we were always Davids to the developers Goliaths'. Matthew attributes the success of the campaign to the adoption of a variety of innovative campaigning methods. Architectural students were invited to make drawings of the facades of condemned buildings to illustrate their quality and variety. On other occasions he and fellow activists would don construction workers clothing, arriving at various local pubs to order the customers outside, informing them that the building was about to be demolished. Their ingenuity stretched to purchasing shares in the companies behind the proposed redevelopment schemes in the West End, which allowed this band of canny operators to attend the various AGM's and ask 'difficult' questions from the floor, to which they demanded answers. The strategy was so successful that not only were these redevelopment schemes abandoned,

but the areas that were threatened given conservation status by the local authority.

The success of the Save Piccadilly campaign gave rise to the formation of The Soho Society in 1972. Matthew, with characteristic modesty, points out that whilst he was in at the beginning, he wouldn't consider himself to be the intellectual powerhouse behind it, instead, leaving that role to Leslie Hardcastle, Bryan Burroughs and Dorothy Donald-Hudson in the early years. However, since then his considerable powers of analysis and observation around local issues, and his obvious love of Soho have made him a tour de force at the top table of the Soho Society and the other local organisations with which he's been involved. The list is a long one and includes the Soho Housing Association, the Soho Parish School, the West End Commission, the West End Partnership and the Soho Neighbourhood Forum to name a few. Matthew talks passionately about the need for Soho to be a place that works for all parties concerned. He is unusual in that he is both a resident and former business owner, a situation that allows him to see situations from both points of view. He further believes that commercial success shouldn't be achieved at the expense of the amenity of the neighbours and their lives shouldn't be made a misery as a consequence. He takes issue with those who run businesses in Soho purely for the purpose of self-enrichment without thought for the impact their activities have on others in the wider community. It's this sort of behaviour that in his words 'gets his goat', makes him stubborn and determined to take them on – 'Soho is bigger and better than purely existing as a profit centre'.

After the success of the Save Piccadilly campaign, Matthew decided to take a break from the life of a Soho activist and enrolled on a degree course at Sussex University to study Urban Sociology. Upon arrival in Brighton, an aunt lent him a car, which made him an ideal candidate to be involved in the daily 'soup run' organised by the students union. He freely admits that his studies became a secondary activity whilst he concerned himself with the plight of the homeless people that he came into contact with in his new-found role. He refused to accept there was no accommodation available for these people and consequently helped to set up the Brighton Housing Trust, which is still in existence today. The plight of the homeless continued to occupy Matthew for the first few years after his return to London in 1978. He set up a scheme in conjunction with Centrepont called the Short Stay Young People Project. Its purpose was to relocate young homeless people outside the immediate vicinity of the West End and therefore away from the dangers of alcohol and drug dependency and prostitution.

In the early 1980's Matthew's life took a new direction leading him into the world of commerce. His father had died and left him a modest but significant sum of money. Uncertain on how he should invest his inheritance he turned to his friend, the restaurateur Peter Boizot. Peter advised him to open a restaurant. 'But I don't know anything about restaurants!' exclaimed Matthew. Peter was insistent that this was the correct course of action and committed to teaching Matthew all about the business. The result was the Soho Pizzeria opening in Beak Street in 1985. Matthew attributed its success to its ethos of providing customers with a pizza and a glass of red wine at a price that wouldn't break the bank. During this time Matthew met some guys who were very concerned about litter and recycling. As an environmentalist himself, he decided to invest some of the profits from the restaurant into a new business called London Recycling that he formed with his new business partners. The business was grown over the next 23 years and finally sold to a Plc. Matthew wryly notes that he started out as an anarchist/extreme left wing English language teacher but was now a capitalist on two fronts!

Soho has long had problems with late night drinking and crime and by the late 90's it was becoming a serious issue. It proved a defining moment for Matthew when once again he was called into public service at the invitation of the police, who valued his insight as both a resident and restaurateur. He was asked to chair a working party around the issue, from which the Good Night Out Report was produced. Its findings resulted in Westminster City Council recognising the severity of the issue and amending its policy on licencing and attitude towards the night-time economy. In 2001 Tony Blair's government announced that they were reforming licencing laws and introducing twenty-four hour licences. Matthew was once again approached to chair a working party called Open All Hours? to lobby the government to introduce regulations around this legislative development. The working party was assisted by a neighbouring MP, Frank Dobson, who at the time was a member of the Cabinet. The Government was persuaded after several battles in the House of Lords, to adopt a local licencing policy as opposed to their preferred 'one size fits all' national one. In recognition of his contribution to this important victory Westminster City Council recommended Matthew for an MBE, which he was awarded in 2015.



Matthew has chaired the Planning Committee of the Soho Society for 25 years and as such has, during this time, commented on all Soho related planning applications received by Westminster City Council. His contribution to the area has been immeasurable – once again using his experience as both a resident and business owner to bring a fair and balanced view to each situation. His experience also made him perfect for a concurrent role, that of Chair of the Soho Neighbourhood Forum Steering Group, which was born out of the Localism Act of 2011. Matthew explains that the Act was primarily designed to allow local communities to produce their own plans for their localities, rather than them being decided at national

level. He acknowledges that the steering group had a tricky and complex task producing a Plan For Soho, given the diversity of this 'full on, 24/7 area', which is primarily business led rather than residential. The Forum persevered and over several years produced a neighbourhood plan that addressed the major issues confronting the area and one that sought to preserve what the Soho Society Honorary President, Leslie Hardcastle, describes as 'the intangible spirit of Soho'. A legally binding referendum was held on 2 September last year and the proposal was given a ringing endorsement with 92% of votes cast being in favour. The Soho Neighbourhood Plan was formally adopted by Westminster City Council on 8 October 2021 and is therefore now part of the statutory Development Plan

for Westminster.

On the eve of his 75th birthday Matthew has decided that it is time to take a step back from the committees that he currently serves on to pursue his other interests. When asked about his thoughts on the future of Soho he replies 'Soho as a physical area is now reasonably well protected but its spirit and character will quite naturally continue to evolve. How is a question for us all'.

Matthew, you probably don't realise just how much you've done for Soho and Soho will be forever grateful to you. We salute you, thank you and wish you all the best for the future!

Interview and photo by Richard Piercy

UPSTAIRS DOWNSTAIRS ART

CLIVE JENNINGS

The landscape of the London art world is constantly evolving and changing. Twenty-five years ago the Portobello area of West London was the place to search out cool young artists, then Shoreditch, Spitalfields and all points east were ‘art washed’; then Fitzrovia became the place to have a gallery, and what was formerly known as ‘North Soho’ still has a lively art scene. Mayfair and St James have always been important, but since its recent redevelopment the traditional epicentre in Cork Street has moved west to Dover Street and Albemarle Street. Soho, always home to several galleries, is now having its moment in the sun, and long may it last.

Of the 18 or so galleries currently in Soho (see list below) around half have opened in the last three years, and around half are ‘upstairs operations’. They have mainly gone for the easily accessible ‘piano nobile’ or first floor, though in the case of Lungley Gallery (currently relocating to Fitzrovia) and Artist Room, they are located on the lofty third floor. There has been a general change of business model in the art world recently, partly exacerbated by the Covid lockdown, whereby galleries are tending to favour more modest premises and spend their budget on art fairs where they can expose their artists to a much wider audience.

Apart from the obvious economic considerations, there are other factors. Laurie, from Artist Room, opined: ‘Our upstairs location gives visitors and collectors a feeling like they’ve discovered something secret. Although we are centrally located, our third-floor space allows for incredible light and great views of the action on Brewer Street. The downside is the tight stairwells means that artwork deliveries can sometimes be awkward!’

The artistic and bohemian legacy of Soho continues to attract young galleries to our manor. India Rose James, of Soho Review Gallery, explains: ‘It’s exciting to have the gallery in Soho and be surrounded by other art spaces with things to see all the time. Being here, it also feels like we are part of a vibrant art ecosystem happening very close by’. Laurie of Artist Room is equally enthusiastic about the area; ‘Soho has a creative energy, unique history and rawness that appeal to The Artist Room’s sensibilities. It’s

incredible to think that we are only a few steps away from The French House where Frances Bacon and John Deakin would wile away the hours!’

Soho is now home to galleries of all shapes and sizes. The very modest Smallest Gallery in Soho at 62 Dean Street (pictured) is a display window where, explain directors Philip Levine and Andreia Costa, ‘Artworks are only to be viewed from the street, so each work is created site specifically for the gallery space’. The vast first floor space that is Sadie Coles HQ at 62 Kingly Street also has branches in Mayfair and St James. It is the depth of the entire block, and has a spectacular space with an enormous window on to

Regent Street.

In addition to the newcomers, there are several longstanding residents. Andrew Edmunds opened at 44 Lexington Street in 1974 and Frith Street gallery has been in its eponymous location since 1989. The Fine Art Society, although a relatively recent addition to Soho, occupying the upper three floors of a beautiful Georgian building at 25 Carnaby Street, had been previously trading in New Bond Street since 1876,

making it one of the first commercial galleries in London.

The mix of art on offer is also varied. Andrew Edmunds specialises in English and French 18th to 19th century prints and drawings, satire, caricature, the unusual and macabre while Maison Bertaux at 28 Greek Street, as well as serving delicious pastries, exhibits several artists better known as comedy actors, including Noel Fielding, Harry Hill and Timothy Spall. Contemporary art from emerging artists can be found at Amanda Wilkinson, Artist Room, Changing Room Gallery, Niru Ratnam, Rhodes Contemporary and Soho Revue Gallery. Karsten Schubert, Robert Upstone and New York gallerist Marion Goodman show more established artists.

In addition to the galleries, if you have access to Soho’s private members’ clubs, you will find some stunning art, and quite likely meet some of the artists who made it. Artists have always been drawn to Soho, from Bacon and Freud in the ‘50s through the YBAs in the ‘80s to the current generation. One issue, probably unique to Soho, that India Rose James mentioned will probably never change, ‘We do get asked if we have models upstairs’!





GALLERIES

- Andrew Edmunds, 44 Lexington Street
andrewedmundsprints.com
- Amanda Wilkinson, 1st Floor, 18 Brewer Street
amandawilkinsongallery.com
- Artist Room, 3rd Floor, 76 Brewer Street
theartistroom.com
- Changing Room Gallery, 13 Manette Street
changingroomgallery.com
- Circa, Piccadilly Lights
circa.art
- Fine Art Society, 1st Floor, 25 Carnaby Street
thefineartsociety.com
- Frith Street Gallery, 60 Frith Street
frithstreetgallery.com
- Frith Street Gallery, 17 Golden Square
frithstreetgallery.com
- Karsten Schubert, 2nd Floor, 44 Lexington Street
karstenschubert.com
- Maison Bertaux, 28 Greek Street
maisonbertaux.com/art-gallery
- Marion Goodman Projects, 23 Golden Square
mariangoodman.com

- Niru Ratnam, 1st Floor, 23c Ganton Street
niruratnam.com
- Photographers Gallery, 16 Ramillies Street
thephotographersgallery.org.uk
- Rhodes Contemporary Art, 42 New Compton Street
rhodescontemporaryart.com
- Robert Upstone Gallery, 1st Floor, 40 Frith Street
robertupstone.com
- Sadie Coles HQ, 1st Floor, 62 Kingly Street
sadiecoles.co
- Smallest Gallery in Soho, 62 Dean Street
thesmallestgalleryinsoho.com
- Soho Revue Gallery, 1-4 Walkers Court
sohorevue.com

MEMBERS CLUBS

- Groucho, 45 Dean Street
thegrouchoclub.com/art
- House of St Barnabus, 1 Greek Street
hosb.org.uk/the-collective
- Union Club / Martinez, 49 Greek Street
unionclub.co.uk/blog
- Soho House, 40 Greek Street
sohohouse.com

GOLDEN SQUARE STOLPERSTEIN

On 30 May 2022 Soho will become the site for the UK's first, and probably only, Stolperstein.

Stolpersteine (pl.), 'stumbling stones' are small brass cobblestone-sized plaques installed into pavements outside the homes and workplaces of victims of Nazi terror. Embossed into the plaques are the name, place and date of birth, date of deportation and death.

German artist Gunter Demnig conceived of the project 25 years ago as a one-off art-memory installation. However, with time it has grown massively, and today there are over 100,000 in 26 countries. The stones commemorate all victims of Nazi persecution:

"Jews, Roma, Sinti, homosexuals, dissidents, Jehovah's Witnesses and victims of euthanasia who were deported and exterminated."

Though they are called 'stumbling stones,' they are flush with the pavement surface. Demnig's idea is that passers-by will 'stumble with their hearts and minds,' as the names of the murdered individuals are returned to their homes and neighbourhoods. The project is the world's largest decentralised Holocaust memorial.

Though England was not occupied by the Nazis, Ada van Dantzig's story has been deemed an exception worthy of this small, personal memorial. Ada van Dantzig, a young Dutch woman, came to London to learn the craft of painting conservation in the studio of the preeminent conservator Helmut Ruhemann. A German Jew, he fled Berlin after being sacked from his post at the Kaiser

Fredrich Museum in the early years of the Third Reich. When Ada learned her family in the Netherlands were at risk, she returned home to aid in their escape. However, the escape plan failed and the whole family, apart from one brother, was deported to Auschwitz. Ada was killed on 14 February 1943. She was 24 years old.

Her parents were killed on the same day. Her sister had been killed at Auschwitz two weeks earlier and a brother was killed there two months later.



The installation and dedication of the Stolperstein for Ada van Dantzig will take place on 30 May 2022 at 11am, in front of 3 Golden Square, the former site of Ruhemann's studio. With this Stolperstein, London, and the UK will become part of the memorial universe it represents.

When explaining his motivation, the artist Demnig often quotes this Jewish saying: 'a person is only forgotten when his or her name is forgotten.' With this Stolperstein, Ada van Dantzig's name, inscribed into the

urban landscape of Soho, will be remembered.'

If you would like to learn more about the project or the event on 30 May please get in touch with Morwena Blewett on :

morwennablewett@hotmail.com

Morwenna Blewett, Associate Fellow Worcester College, Oxford University

Ruth Mandel, Professor of Anthropology, UCL

BACON IN MOSCOW

CLIVE JENNINGS

by James Birch with Michael Hodges
cheeriopublishing.com, £17.99

In 1988, against all the odds, Soho gallerist and bon viveur James Birch, still in his twenties, took an exhibition of the UK's most famous artist, Francis Bacon, to pre-Glasnost Moscow, the capital of the world's most secretive and closed country. *Bacon in Moscow* is the fascinating story of how Birch, by a combination of guile and good fortune, managed to woo both Bacon and the Russians. The result was the first exhibition by a living international Western Artist on Russian soil for over fifty years, an exhibition that was visited by 400,000 people in six weeks and heralded the cultural changes in the USSR that resulted in the momentous fall of the Berlin Wall a year later.

Birch's account of how he achieved this coup is a picaresque, ripping yarn, somewhere between a John le Carré novel and *Carry On Up the Colony Room*. It was in this notorious members' bar, and in *The Groucho Club*, both very convenient for Birch's Dean Street gallery, that a lot of the negotiations with Bacon took place. Along the way, we are introduced to a dramatis personae of fascinating characters: James Birch, the handsome young ingénue art dealer; Francis Bacon, the legendary but unpredictable artist; John Edwards, Bacon's East End pal and protector; Sergei Klokov, the influential, charming and ruthless fixer and KGB agent; Elena Khudiakova, the beautiful young designer who was the bait in a honey trap set for Birch, and wanted only to escape to the West; and many more.

After his initial introduction to Russian movers and shakers, his first idea was to take gallery artists, *The Neo Naturists*, a subversive art group whose practice included cavorting about in the nude, and whose number included now National Treasure, Grayson Perry. Quickly realising their brand of art was not going to work in pre-Glasnost Moscow, and after an abortive attempt to interest Andy Warhol, he decided on Francis Bacon, a family friend whom Birch had known since his childhood, when Bacon famously photographed an eight year old James - or 'Rawhide', his nickname, after the TV show - in the bath.

Grayson Perry takes up the story: 'A rollicking cultural

adventure before ... the meteoric rise of contemporary art in the nineties. James Birch pulls off an artistic coup necessitating endless champagne nights in Soho with Francis Bacon and marathon Moscow vodka sessions with the mysterious Sergei Klokov. Fascinating and true. What a liver!' Fast paced and anecdotal, each chapter ends on a promise of more excitement to come. Birch documents the outlandish characters he comes across in his quest, the quite hilarious scrapes he gets into and the vicissitudes of dealing with Bacon's gallery and The British Council. The book also has a quite shocking afterword, a denouement that Birch only fully discovered fifteen years after the exhibition.



A very different read to the recent 1000 page book *Francis Bacon – Revelations*, the definitive life of Bacon by Pulitzer Prize winners, Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan - *Bacon in Moscow* is a funny, affectionate and poignant account of a young blade's artistic adventure that became a unique art event of international importance. The *Art Newspaper* noted that, 'The sharply observed details and telling anecdotes brings Francis Bacon and his motley milieu to life in ways that even the most meticulously researched and scholarly biographies never

can'. Described as *The Pimpernel Curator*, Birch went on to exhibit *Gilbert and George* in Moscow in 1990 and in Beijing in 1993, and still hopes to curate an exhibition in North Korea.

This is a fast paced, exhilarating story about one of Soho's own, and by one of Soho's own – I believe that it could easily transfer successfully to the big or small screen. The book is lavishly illustrated and includes a facsimile of the original catalogue. It also has a selection of comments from the exhibition's *Visitors' Book*. These are quite wonderful, and include:

'Bacon is beautiful in his monstrosity. If he is mad, he is neither more nor less so than the modern world.'

'I like Frank Zappa. I like Francis Bacon. Thank you.'

'We want Bacon, not Francis Bacon.'

THEATRES, MUSEUMS & GALLERIES FROM LONDON LIVING LARGE

LIFE OF PI ★★★★★

Wyndham's Theatre | Nov 15, 2021 - May 29, 2022
Mon, Wed - Sat: 7:30 pm, Thu & Sat: 2:30 pm, Sun: 3 pm



The *Life of Pi* is the triumph of Hiran Abeysekera. His impressive Pi is never off the stage and the audience's eyes are never off him. The amazing animals created for the show are entrancing, but it is Abeysekera who dominates. He moves seamlessly from inquisitive, vulnerable child to wounded prisoner of his own memories. Readers of the novel or viewers of the film may well wonder how this story can be successfully translated to the stage, but it succeeds quite wonderfully. Lolita Chakrabarti has done a fine job of bringing the essence out of the rather prolix novel, and director, Max Webster, has

This is a production that exceeds on every level and merits a long run

paced the piece quite beautifully. Tim Hatley's set is brilliantly versatile and cunningly complemented by the video and projections of Andrzej Goulding. With Tim Lutkin's lighting they have created an extraordinary atmosphere that takes us aboard Pi's boat and allows us to share his horrifying adventure. The puppets of Finn Caldwell and Nick Barnes are inspired. From the central figure of Richard Parker, the tiger, to the fish in the sea, their presence and movement are totally credible and quite stunning. The cast is rounded out by a group of excellent actors who assume various characters as the absorbing tales of Pi's voyage come to light. Mina Anwar is an engagingly sympathetic Amma and Habib Nasib Nader is truly menacing as Cook. Kirsten Foster and David K.S. Tse are suitably brittle as the bureaucratic consular and insurance officials who interview Pi to seek his truth, only to be confounded by the complex nature of it. This is a production that succeeds on every level and merits a long run in the West End to delight and terrify its audiences!

Reviewed by J.C.
Photo by Johan Persson.

BONNIE & CLYDE THE MUSICAL

Arts Theatre: From April 9, 2022
The original outlaw lovers! In the Depression they caught the imagination of a nation. This musical should catch ours.

THE WORLD OF STONEHENGE ★★★★★

The British Museum | Feb 17 - Jul 17, 2022
Daily: 10 am - 5 pm, Fridays: until 8.30 pm



This is a truly stunning exhibition. It brings together over 430 objects from 35 lenders and allows treasures from across the UK and Europe to communicate the story of their creators. We are invited into a fascinating world that coexisted with that of the Egyptians who contemporaneously built the Sphinx and the Great Pyramid at Giza. While the Stonehenge circle is probably one of the most recognised images that exists, its meanings and history remain shrouded in mystery for most of us. This wonderfully curated exhibition provides a context for the monument's creation and explores its ongoing fascination for the ancient and modern world. The various pieces are quite breathtaking and it would be simply impossible to single out any one particular object as a favourite. The absolutely awesome "Seahenge," the beautiful "Nebra Sky Disc" or the treasures buried with the Amesbury Archer - they are all bound to capture the imagination and to transport the spectator to the world of the builders and later users of the Stonehenge site. We are exposed to ingenious and creative cultures that worshipped, buried their dead, and contemplated the wonders of the universe via their magnificent creations. This is more than an exhibition for those curious about the monument on Salisbury Plain. It succeeds in piquing not only one's imagination about humanity's history, but encourages the visitor to share our ancestors' contemplation of our place in the cosmos.

Reviewed by J.C.
Image: Nebra sky disc, Germany, about 1600 BC. State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt, Juraj Lipták.

FASHIONING MASCULINITIES: THE ART OF MENSWEAR

V&A Museum: Mar 19 - Nov 6, 2022
Clothes make the man! Here's how fashion interprets, designs and ultimately comes to define gender.

For more reviews and ratings visit:
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A CASE OF THE DISAPPEARING ACTOR

CLIVE JENNINGS

Stephen Lees is a West End resident and Soho ‘face’ of many years standing, as those of you who frequent(ed) The Colony Room, The Groucho and The House of St Barnabus will know. When he is not exercising his legal skills in his day job – Stephen trained as a barrister at Lincoln’s Inn – he produces exquisite line drawings of important buildings, both extant and no longer around. Many of these finely detailed drawings were published by Bloomsbury in the book *Visions of Architecture* in 2011. Stephen continues to draw, and also to write extensively – sixteen books in all - including six novels that feature a certain Mr Sherlock Holmes tackling new cases and a set of six books on the history of London’s Music Halls.

Stephen’s latest Sherlock Holmes book, *A Case of the Disappearing Actor*, is lavishly illustrated with his line drawings of buildings that feature in the text, including hidden structures and ones in which questionable activities take place. Amongst these is The House of St Barnabus, located at the south east corner of Soho Square, which is cleverly reinvented in the text as Doctor Watson’s club. The good Doctor describes the building at length, and we learn much of its history. Stephen has recently generously

donated this drawing to the club that it depicts, where it will hang for the pleasure of visitors to the club.

A full list of Stephen’s books can be found on Amazon.co.uk



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營業時間

星期一	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
星期二	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
星期三	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
星期四	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
星期五	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
星期六	休息		
星期日	休息		

Opening hours
Monday to Friday 9:00am - 6.30pm
Saturday closed
Sunday closed

CHOCOLATE HEAVEN

DAVID GLEESON

SAID: Societa Azionaria Industria Dolciumi

41 Broadwick Street, Soho W1F 9QL

At first glance, SAID may seem like yet another Soho cafe, albeit one with a carefully planned menu and a chic semi-industrial interior, with walls lined with antique tin chocolate moulds. Whilst it can adequately provide all your grazing needs, the unique thing about this place is that it can provide chocolate like no other. The cakes and pastries - all produced on site - are a cut (or twelve) above those available elsewhere, and the hot chocolate will make you forsake all the other lame beverages that presume to the title. Wonderfully, they will also provide pasta with chocolate shavings, which tastes every bit as good as any chocoholic dare expect.

The 'Societa Azionaria Industria Dolciumi' started out as a Rome chocolate manufacturer in 1923. Ninety years later, with international tourists beseeching them to open branches in their home countries, they decided to give it a try and opened their second premises in Broadwick Street in November 2013. Their success is evidenced by queues out the door most weekends and the opening of a second branch in Fitzrovia, then another in Dubai. It seems a happy coincidence that such a singular Italian company opened in Soho, so I asked Andrea Alinovi, partner and London Director, how it happened. "It's the only area in central London that, for me, still has the energy of a small village community - I don't know anywhere else in London which feels like Soho. At the time I was asking around for premises, people were advising against

Soho and recommending Chelsea, Hampstead. I disagreed because Soho feels so different - this is me and my culture! My heart chose here! Plus if we were elsewhere we would be seen purely as a luxury product. Here we can be ourselves!"

SAID very likely sells more chocolate than any other commercial premises in central London. It can be eaten, drunk or simply taken away, and Andrea estimates that the Broadwick Street shop alone sells about 1500 kg of chocolate each month. "Most places that sell chocolate either trade small amounts or deal with ganache, a mixture of chocolate and cream. Most of SAID's chocolate products are unadulterated, pure chocolate. And generous helpings - the chocolate waffles have about 100g of melted chocolate!"

Andrea is rightly proud of the products sold in SAID. The sublime Dolce Ricco is a flourless chocolate tart that has graced the last two Soho Society AGMs, for which we are hugely grateful, and the basement kitchen has developed it's own "Italian take" on carrot and salted caramel cakes, both of which are not so well known in Italy but sell very well here to customers who, mysteriously, feel like skipping chocolate. He disclosed that their chefs are developing a new hot chocolate: white with crushed pistachios. SAID is about to get even more heavenly.



ROSEMARY KOFTAS

SUSAN FLEMING

The plant that most thrives in my window box and garden at the moment is rosemary. It is a herb which loves the baking heat and dryness of the Mediterranean, but can flourish further north if grown in a sheltered place. Its natural affinity is with lamb: sprigs can be tucked into little slits in a roasting joint, or under and atop a joint; you can add sprigs to the oil in which you are frying potatoes; and it has pride of place in a bouquet garni. Here, it adds its flavour - in a less usual way - to some spiced Lamb Koftas.

Serves 4

500g lamb mince
 2 fat garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
 2 tsp each of ground cumin, ground coriander and paprika
 1 tsp cayenne pepper
 salt and black pepper
 8 x 12-14cm sprigs of fresh rosemary
 vegetable oil, for brushing

To serve

100g Greek yoghurt
 1 fat garlic clove, peeled and crushed
 8 small pitta breads
 6 radishes, washed and sliced
 ½ cucumber, sliced
 2 lemons, halved

Heat the grill to high.

In a bowl, mix the lamb mince, garlic and spices. Add salt and pepper to taste. Form into small sausage shapes around each of the rosemary sprigs. Place on a grill rack and brush with oil. Grill for about 6-8 minutes, turning once.

While the lamb is grilling, mix the yoghurt with the garlic, and season with salt and pepper.

Serve the koftas in or with the pitta breads, along with the garlic yoghurt, sliced radishes and cucumber. Squeeze lemon juice over everything.



THE RECTOR WRITES



We have become a bit obsessed with numbers over the last couple of years. We've been bombarded with numbers by those in government and tied ourselves in knots trying to interpret them. Wondering whether the 'R number' was above or below one, the numbers infected, admitted to hospital or dying with covid all became a daily fascination and of understandable concern. And before we could get our heads around those we were being presented with another set of figures- the percentages of those vaccinated, double vaccinated... boosted. It was light relief to see a number we've never seen before or will ever see again recently: the palindrome 22-02-2022.

On the 26 January about 50 of us gathered at St Anne's to bid farewell to dear old Betty Wright, who at 96 had gone to her rest and finally stopped telling unsuspecting passers-by to 'F-off'. She didn't go in for abbreviations though, preferring instead the full Anglo Saxon, frequently greeting newcomers to St Anne's who bent caringly towards her to say hello with 'who the F are you?'. A resident of St Anne's Court for many years, and before that Sandringham Flats on Charing Cross Road, her diminutive frame was often seen around Soho going to Tesco, the 'paper shop' on Dean Street for a packet of fags and a bottle of Merlot, or going into the NatWest Bank, where Brenda would stop her from withdrawing more money than she needed. She would come to St Anne's for the pensioners' lunch on Thursdays and Holy Communion on Sundays and Tuesdays, and frequently handed over a handful of coppers and five pence pieces. How anyone acquired so much small change in such a short space of time was a mystery, how you also make it smell so strongly of stale cigarette smoke was another one of the mysteries of Betty.

Betty's life was shrouded in mystery. Married in St Martin-

in-the-Fields to a man who was not the best of husbands, she was devoted to her mother who they lived with; and yet, clearing her Soho Housing Association flat once she had moved into a nursing home, not a single photo could be found of either of them. Communication was difficult with Betty as she was so deaf and kept her hearing aids for special occasions, possibly sleeping in. She was rumoured to have lost her hearing when a bomb went off in Soho. We

can only speculate as to whether it was one of the bombs that destroyed St Anne's or the Fire Station on Shaftesbury Avenue.

Diminutive, unintentionally hilarious, cantankerous and vulnerable, she loved Soho and felt safe here; it provided her with not just a community but a family and the sight of her tottering up the road with her blasted trolley tripping people up, or gathering A-boards from outside restaurants is a sight many of us will miss.

An even larger gathering sent another member of the Soho Community on his way on 18 February. Had it not been for Storm Eunice even more would have gathered to watch the service relayed to St Anne's Gardens. Instead 130 packed our 'bijou' church, another thirty-odd watched via video link in the Allen Room and over 1000 watched on YouTube. David Stuart, who died many decades younger than Betty, was not just liked or loved but a life-saving hero to many. A tall handsome Aussie with a colourful past, after a difficult start in life he was the person who allegedly coined the phrase 'chemsex'. This referred

to (usually) gay men whose weekends were fuelled with a high and frequently destructive amount of sex and drugs. David was open about his familiarity with both the perils and the pleasures of this lifestyle and he championed open conversations in which people could talk about their habits, challenges and worries without fear of stigma. He was a



truly empathetic person who longed for a world in which people were simply kinder to one another.

I recalled at his funeral that I had once run for his help when he was working at 56 Dean Street, the sexual health clinic next door. I was engaged in conversation with a young man who had wandered into St Anne's who, I thought, had maybe just lost a parent, such was his lost and tearful demeanour. However as the conversation progressed, or rather went off on tangents, I realised I was wrong. He was on a drug related downer after a weekend of partying. I think the phrase is 'he was off his tits'. David was brilliantly calm and reassuring - not least to me, reassuring me that I had done all that I could - which was to treat this young man kindly which, he said, is all we need in life.

Soho provided Betty and David, different as they were, with a place they could call home, a place where they were

accepted as they were, and in which they could grow and flourish. Amongst the 3500 residents Betty was a one-off who was supported by those who lived around her; amongst the thousands more who work in Soho David came to contribute something truly unique and much needed. The Christian faith proclaims that God knows us as individuals - as if engraved on God's hand, called and known individually by name. We are not just a number, a fraction or a statistic on a government spreadsheet. We are each individual, precious and beautiful, and Soho is full of people just like that, here not just for ourselves but for one another.

Rev'd Simon Buckley



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