

## **CWT May 2024 Update**

Dear Members,

2024 has so far been a busy year for the Cheyne Walk Trust.

### **CHELSEA EMBANKMENT GARDENS**

These historically attractive gardens have suffered from under-maintenance as a result of budget cuts some years ago that limited routine upkeep and led to the elimination of seasonal replanting of the attractive formal beds. Last year the Trust formed a Chelsea Embankment Gardens Steering Group chaired by our newsletter editor Hallie Swanson with a view to enhancing the gardens with fresh planting that could be sustainably maintained within the available budget as well as the essential refurbishment of ornamental items, garden benches, waste bins etc.

The Steering Group had very helpful support from our Ward Councillors Elizabeth Campbell, Emma Will and Gerard Hargreaves who supported funding from RBKC CIL sources. Local enthusiasts Sue Medway, Curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden, Penny Pocock of the Chelsea Gardens Guild and others have worked closely with Council Officers Sarah Brion and Hassan Elkoly doing excellent work in engaging Landscape Designers Boon Brown and landscape gardening contractors Ginko, who have created and delivered an attractive scheme now coming into its own after planting in the spring.

The opportunity has been taken to improve the setting of garden figures and ornaments, including the replacement of a statue stolen from its plinth some years ago. The committee commissioned a new statue by celebrated sculptor Amelia Saint George, and this will be formally installed on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May and unveiled by Bill Wyman, Guest of Honour, on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May at a reception celebrating the restoration of the Chelsea Embankment Gardens. Bill Wyman of Rolling Stones fame is also the acclaimed author of "Bill Wyman's Chelsea".

The reception and unveiling will be held at 4:30 on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May in Petyt Hall, 64 Cheyne Walk. Members who may be interested are welcome to be attend.

## **Making Battersea Bridge Safe**

The Battersea Bridge/Cheyne Walk junction has been an accident black spot for far too many years; the Cheyne Walk Trust together with the Chelsea Society, other Resident Associations and the Council for RBKC have long sought to make this junction, controlled by Transport for London, safer for all. In 2003, TFL undertook to introduce safety measures in 2005 but failed to carry them through.

In the 5 years up to 31 December 2020, there were 63 recorded collisions with 72 casualties, including a fatality. A second fatality in January 2021 galvanised public concern. A jogger, Jack Ryan, tragically was killed while trying to cross the northern end of the bridge at Cheyne Walk where there was no controlled pedestrian facility.

After the years of delay and a hugely well supported campaign in 2021 by journalist Rob McGibbon, TFL belatedly completed installation of a light-controlled crossing at the north end of Battersea Bridge in December 2021. Disastrously, a third fatality occurred on 10 August 2023 when a 27 year-old lady cyclist was crushed against the bridge pavement balustrade by a large truck.

TFL eventually held a public consultation on the other three unprotected arms of the junction in 2022/23, publishing a report in June 2023.

A joint RBKC, Chelsea Society and Cheyne Walk Trust proposal for a 3-phase Chelsea Option safety scheme based on considered traffic data collection and assessment was disregarded by the TFL consultation report.

Clearly, it is vital that unforgivably delayed improvements are implemented urgently on the still unsafe remaining 3 arms of the junction, not least since the government committed £1.5m to the project for FY 2022. Equally, it is critical that safety improvement plans are agreed with RBKC that are acceptable to Chelsea residents rather than dominated and distorted by TFL's ambitions to project a cycle superhighway (CS8) along the whole of Chelsea riverside. TFL plans for CS8 have already resulted in the disruptive banning of north and south turns at Chelsea bridge,

creating huge congestion west along Chelsea Thames-side, likely to be compounded by TFL plans further to restrict access to and from roads into Chelsea. CS8 plans for Chelsea Embankment/Cheyne Walk include the introduction of needless road constricting Bus lanes for the 5 times per hour route 170 bus. The Kings Road is almost gridlocked already following the installation of TFL inspired Local Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN) in Fulham and this will become significantly worse.

TFL also proposes to ban the present left turn north into Beaufort Street for eastbound traffic. There is no evidence of accidents to pedestrians or cyclists from left turning vehicles at this junction. The recorded accidents and fatalities have taken place at the northern access to or actually on Battersea Bridge. This ban will displace further traffic onto the already overloaded Oakley Street and Tite Street routes. It will also be an undoubted precedent for TFL to ban the few remaining turns North into Chelsea from the riverside. Those who live or work in southwest Chelsea will effectively lose normal vehicle access to their borough and have to make substantial traffic increasing detours to do so. We have noted and strongly endorse the related campaign by local MP Greg Hands to “Keep Chelsea Moving”.

Following a briefing meeting between RBKC, TFL and some resident associations on 11 March 2024 and subsequent correspondence with TFL, it was agreed to establish a forum for further discussion of the scheme.

The Trust together with the Chelsea Society, the Council for RBKC and the most concerned, affected Resident Associations including for Oakley St., Tite St., Beaufort St., Chelsea Old Church St., and others have formed a Chelsea Alliance for Safer Traffic (CAST) to engage with Transport For London in order to obtain up to date traffic counts and to discuss options for better safety for all traffic modes, approaches to and movement on Battersea Bridge with green man controls as a priority and to:

- Remove systemic actual and proposed flaws such as the emergency traffic scheme north and south turn bans at Chelsea Bridge/Chelsea Embankment and the arbitrary left turn north vehicle ban into Beaufort Street.
- Measure and evaluate present transport and accident data for all modes on the key routes and junctions of Chelsea Embankment and Cheyne Walk

- Evolve an equitable overall traffic management scheme for shared transport modes that avoids unfair constraints or additional traffic displacement and takes account of consultations with stakeholders.

## **RIVER THAMES CONSERVATION AREA AND CHELSEA REACH**

The Cheyne Walk Trust with The Chelsea Society (TCS) and the Chelsea Reach Boatowners' Association (CRBA) have since 2017 sought to persuade the Council for RBKC to exercise planning control of moorings and moored vessels to protect the Riverside against significant damage to its historic and conservation character.

This has been threatened by ongoing pressure and attempts by the mooring licensees of Cadogan Pier Ltd and Chelsea Yacht and Boat Company (CYBC) to introduce oversized, unsightly moored residential vessels at both Cadogan Pier and Chelsea Reach, in conflict with long-established RBKC planning guidance, notably the RBKC Battersea Reach Houseboat Design Policy Guidelines 1976, the RBKC River Thames Conservation Area Statement 1983 and its succeeding guidance: the Thames Conservation Area Appraisal (TCAA) and the related River Thames Conservation Area Plan (RTCAMP). This we hoped would be resolved in August 2023 at a very welcome meeting called by the Leader RBKC Cllr Elizabeth Campbell, at which the respective KCs engaged by RBKC and TCS/CWT/CRBA were requested to review the legal planning powers that could be exercised by RBKC with a common agenda of appropriate use of powers to protect the area. That meeting took place indicating a high degree of alignment between the respective Senior Counsels on the relevant legal powers open to the Council.

Surprisingly, Council planning officers were reluctant to enforce action to remove the mega houseboats that had been moored without the appropriate planning applications required by the established planning guidelines. The matter was therefore referred to RBKC's Planning Applications Committee (PAC) for resolution and was considered at three PAC meetings, most recently on 7 May 2024 at which the PAC resolved unanimously that the three (or a lesser number) of mega house boats caused material change of use through intensification and was a harmful

breach of planning control and therefore authorised enforcement action.

Previously on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 at a full RBKC Council Meeting Cllr Gerard Hargreaves moved that the Council urgently complete work on the River Thames Conservation Area Management Plan to ensure the Council further protect Chelsea Riverside Ward from overdevelopment along the Chelsea foreshore. The Motion was carried by a unanimous vote of the Council members.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 the Chelsea Yacht and Boat Company submitted an application to the Council of RBKC for a Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use of Development (CLEUD) in respect of their present use of the moorings at 106 Cheyne Walk, including the unpermitted mooring of the three mega barges in place at the time. The Trust together with the TCS and CRBA and their lawyers considered the CLEUD to be fundamentally flawed and urged the Council for RBKC to reject the application forthwith. The Council duly refused the CLEUD on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024 on the grounds that the use of the site as at the date of the application for the mooring of currently named Houseboat Pacifica and Houseboat Zephyr is not a lawful use.

It is open to CYBC to appeal against both the Council's enforcement action and its refusal of the CLEUD. We will strongly oppose any such Appeals since permitted use by the mega barge houseboats would cause material damage and harm to the River Thames Conservation Area and its vital and much-loved riverside community.

In conclusion should any members wish to support the Trust's activities in any of these or other matters do please contact me ([Chmn@cheynewalktrust.org](mailto:Chmn@cheynewalktrust.org)) by e-mail.