

PANDEMIC SPECIAL EDITION



Violinist Tamsin Lewis
Photo by Rob Taggart

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THE ST JOHN'S WOOD SOCIETY

Registered Charity No 232270

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About the St John's Wood Society

Our objective is to encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity and historical interest in St John's Wood and improve its social and cultural wellbeing.

As a statutory consultee the Society is consulted by Westminster City Council on Town Planning applications and Transport matters. We will advise where possible with local planning issues.

The many benefits of being a member of the Society include a local discount scheme, bi-annual magazines, community news updates and events.

Support your community.

Click [here](#) to join the St John's Wood Society.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Neighbours,

Shop local.

Eat local.

Those are among the most important things we can do as the Covid lockdown eases, and I would like to encourage every one of us in St John's Wood to support our community's businesses.



Our shops, whether on the High Street or elsewhere in the neighbourhood, are re-opening. If things go as currently planned, our restaurants and cafes will follow in early July. This is exciting and welcome. There is activity again!

But please be in no doubt that all these businesses are struggling after three months of no or limited trading. Three shops on the High Street have already shut for good.

Others may follow unless we show commitment to them now.

To facilitate the re-opening of food and beverage establishments in St John's Wood, Westminster Council will be introducing a number of temporary measures in the coming weeks, lasting probably three to six months maximum. They will allow for more tables and chairs outside while also creating space for social distancing, both for diners and for passing pedestrians. There may be fewer parking spaces for a few months, but more space to eat and drink and socialise.

Summer is here. This will be a different one for sure. But let's all take advantage of the weather to come out to our shops and restaurants. To enjoy a change of pace from home. To interact with familiar faces in person (from a social distance, of course), and to help get the enterprises in our community rolling again.

Dick Schumacher
Chairman, St John's Wood Society

The Society is grateful for the support of its Corporate Members.

St John's Wood Reopens!

Greg Beitchman

Welcome to a special pandemic St John's Wood Society Newsletter. We aim to create a more regular flow of news and information for you to connect with the High Street, the community, and further afield.

As the virus has changed lives across the country and London, we have all seen the solidarity shown by communities and businesses. Stories of collaboration and mutual help in St John's Wood have been truly inspiring.

According to the ONS website, there have been fewer than twenty deaths in the Wood in the three months of lockdown.

With retailers now getting back into business, we wanted to share a few details on what's next:

- This week: partial re-opening of retailers, including clothing and toy shops, on the High Street. Social distancing rules are in place inside shops and in queues outside, so keep your eyes out for guidance.
- 4 July: pub and restaurant reopening, with social distancing and plenty of outdoor tables, is expected, but subject to Government discussions on social distancing.
- Hair salons, nail salons and other beauty and wellness businesses are expected to open provisionally in July, but no official guidance has been issued yet.

The St John's Wood Society Newsletter got in touch with Gotz Mohindra, Regent's Park Ward Councillor, who has been coordinating reopening policy with Westminster Council, with input from High Street businesses.

Mohindra says immediate priorities are on making it possible for queues to form with 2-metre distancing, while leaving enough space for residents to move around safely. Part of the solution has been to suspend parking bays on the south side of Circus Road between the High Street and Wellington Road, allowing pedestrians to pass busy units such as Panzer's, Gail's and Starbucks more safely.

In more central parts of Westminster, plans are underway for full street closings to allow restaurants



The new normal in St John's Wood with social distancing measures in place but a bustle returning to the shops.

Photos by Rob Taggart (top), Greg Beitchman (above and left)

and pubs to accommodate customers outside. For now this doesn't appear to be the plan for St John's Wood, but leaders are reviewing all possibilities.

'We welcome ideas from the local community on what we can do on a temporary basis to encourage the safe return of shoppers as the lockdown eases', Mohindra said.

Planning meetings are happening nearly every day, and all ideas are welcome – temporary or long term. If you have any suggestions let us know [here](#) and we will pass them on.

Almost all retail business has opened, with a limit of 3 customers per store, and a few clever systems in place. Regal Shoes, for example, is offering appointments for shoe purchases!

Panzer's: Fully open, with social distancing

Laurent: Takeaway

Harry Morgan's: Takeaway; 4 July opening planned

Sahara: Takeaway, including veggies and other foodstuff; 4 July opening planned

Fora: Takeaway, some limited outdoor seating; 4 July opening planned

Good Life Eatery: Takeaway, including various natural foodstuffs; 4 July opening planned

Beauty and Wellness Salon: 4 July opening planned

We would welcome your updates, feedback and submissions whenever you have them, as we try to help reconnect our community.

A helping hand for our rough sleepers

Virginia Newman

The effect of this pandemic is even more critical for rough sleepers. How do you escape the virus when you have no secure roof over your head? The Government therefore asked all local authorities to get rough sleepers off the streets. Westminster's outreach teams have helped more than eight hundred such people. A range of hostels, hotels and serviced apartments have been made available across the borough with toiletries, food and comfort. Trained nurses ensure that people with symptoms are given medical attention and are able to self-isolate.

Sadly, however, there are just over a hundred people who refuse to engage with this assistance programme, or who are newly homeless, and who are still sleeping on the streets of Westminster, including St John's Wood. Mental health and substance abuse remain big issues. Westminster works with a range of faith and volunteer groups, and it is hoped that the efforts going into providing support during the pandemic will increasingly foster change and a route away from the streets.

If you are concerned about someone sleeping rough please alert StreetLink, using their app or via their [website](#). Your alert will help local outreach teams try to connect with the person you are worried about. This can be done anonymously, or you can engage with StreetLink and receive feedback. You will be asked where and when you saw the person and any other information you can provide. If you think the person is under 18 or if they are in a dangerous location (e.g. blocking a fire escape) then you should contact the police.

Please remember, hostels with all their facilities are free. Do not give directly to beggars. Any financial donation should be made to an official homeless charity, where it will be put to good use.



A study in contrasts. Photos by Virginia Newman (top), Rob Taggart (above)

Donations such as toiletries, clothes and entertainment items for people housed in WCC hotels can be left from 10 am to 1 pm Monday to Wednesday and 10 am to noon Fridays at St Joseph's Hall, Kensington, SW7 2RR

Contact [Kate MacKenzie](#) (07884 076959) and [Lucia Iye](#) in advance to advise delivery time and contents.