

Chair's Report

Covent Garden will always be an exceptional place in which to live and work and, now in its 31st year, the CGCA has continued its role in supporting this special community.

Once again, we are indebted to John Bos for all his hard work as our Co-ordinator, and to Alison Cattermoule, his part-time assistant, and our two regular volunteers David Lusty, our Planning Advisor, and Robert Clark, who continue to give us a great deal of their precious time. The load would become impossible to bear if we did not have such an excellent group of volunteers and with John's co-ordination we progress.

From leaflet delivering and filing, to the arrival at distant courts of objectors, opposing yet another unwelcome or unsuitable planning/licensing application, from countless meetings attended with observations and subsequent action, to the committees and chairs of all the TAs and the complex issues they resolve, the planning meetings, the environment meetings, the police meetings – the list is pretty staggering and so much of it would not happen, were it not for people who give of their time and energy to keep this precious community spirit alive and thriving.

Despite its problems, it is still a unique place where you can know

your neighbours, which is more than can be said for many other parts of London. Of course, progressively, it is becoming harder and our quality of life seems to be eroding with the drugs scene pervasive, the drunks on the increase, and noisier, the illegal street traders, the constant developments, scaffolding, shopfitters, urine, the lack of visible policing, the loss of individual shops (Neal Street East the latest and lamented), and the invasion of the multiples, who are the only people who can pay the horrific rents, set by greedy landlords. Of course, these negative events have a major impact on our lives.

But, after the haunting horror of New York's tragedy, and with the horrors of war so real in so many places today, we are blessed to be in an uninvaded space in which to enjoy freedom from tyranny, terrorism, starvation, discrimination, abuse and corruption, whilst so many are suffering these horrific injustices, our problems, though countless and real enough, take on another perspective and we can be thankful that we live in a democracy where we are free to grumble and criticise but continue to live on the whole safely, and not, as is the fate of so many others, be desperate to leave and get out, merely in order to survive.

JO WEIR