

RECLAIM ROSSLYN ROAD

Update: Rosslyn Road BPAS Clinic Protest

PETITION STATUS

Please encourage everyone you know locally to sign our petition. They can now do it in two ways:

- Either on-line on our website: <http://e-voice.org.uk/reclaimrosslynroad>
- Or on paper at:
 - Il Vero Gusto café – 376 Richmond Road
 - Twickenham Park surgery – 17 Rosslyn Road
 - Fresh Food & Wines – 352 Richmond Road

We quickly crossed the 250 signature threshold - hugely encouraging given minimal publicity. It shows how many people are upset by the behaviour of protestors. The doctors' surgery and ETNA serve the whole of East Twickenham, so we are picking up support from both north and south of Richmond Road. Nearly 70 people recently viewed our news story on the **East Twickenham Village Group** website: <http://easttwickenham.org/>.

PLEASE EMAIL US!

We're probably in for a long campaign and would really like to keep everyone up-to-date as we go along. It is so much cheaper/quicker/simpler to do this by email so, if we don't already have your email address, please email us at reclaimrosslyn@gmail.com.

- *We promise that your details will **not** be shared with anyone else or be made visible to others.*
- *If you're not an email user, rest assured that we will continue to keep you involved.*
- *And if we've misread your name/address from the petition, many apologies but please put us right.*

NOT TAKING SIDES

An important feature of our campaign is that we are **not** taking sides in the debate for or against abortion. Our objection to the protest is simple and clear: the behaviour of the protestors is adversely affecting residents and visitors and they are showing disrespect for our community and us. Regardless of our personal views on that debate, this non-partisan position is a central principle of the campaign and it is **vital** that we explain it carefully to anyone who is interested.

NEW "VIGIL" OUTSIDE THE CLINIC

The main organiser of the protest, the "Good Counsel Network", has joined forces with US-based anti-abortion group "40 days for life" to conduct 40 day prayer "vigils" outside clinics in several countries, including Rosslyn Road in the UK. In theory the vigil is in place for up to 12 hours a day, seven days per week, well beyond clinic opening times - apparently local residents need to be 'educated'! In practice, not many people have turned up to pray, and for some reason the lurid pavement displays seem to have disappeared – perhaps temporarily. The vigil is due to end 2 November.

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

The good news is that a new local police officer - PS Tracey Wignall, based in Twickenham - has been appointed as a focal point for issues associated with the protest.

Residents have a really important role to play by reporting any incidents or upsets caused by the protestors. If you're passing the clinic and feel blocked, harassed or intimidated in any way, or observe anyone else being adversely affected, please report it as soon as possible. **You can do that in three ways:**

- **Call 101** (the non-emergency police number) – the police on this Met Police line are helpful and will arrange a local response, usually within an hour. Calls can be made anonymously if you wish.

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- **Email Tracey** at tracey.wignall@met.police.uk. You can also call her direct on **020 8247 7163**, but she's not always there, so be prepared to leave a message.
- **Send the details** to us at reclaimrosslyn@gmail.com and we will forward them (anonymously if preferred).

We believe that the steady exposure of regular disruption, even if it's low-level, will ultimately give the police the weight of evidence they need to stop the nuisance to the clinic's clients, and to us. Obviously, if there's an incident where police presence is needed urgently, then dial 999.

DIRECT ACTION

Some residents want to voice their disgust with the behaviour of the protestors when they walk past them. This is clearly a personal decision but needs care - please bear in mind the impact on any women visiting the clinic at the time (including those already inside). If you do wish to take direct action, here are a few thoughts:

- Please make sure you remain entirely non-physical/within the law. We mustn't give the protestors an excuse to undermine the legitimacy of our case. "The Good Counsel Network" seems to have access to high-level legal expertise and will be happy to play the victim. Remember, we are the 'good guys' here!
- If their lurid pavement displays of fetuses reappear, you are free to turn them over or hand them back to one of the protestors (**but under no circumstance walk off with the pictures as this is theft**). Doing this is a legitimate protest on your part, so if you wish to, don't be put off by protestors telling you that you can't touch their property – it's on a public footpath and you have a right to do so.
- The protestors claim that they only speak to women who wish to speak to them. So if a protestor has stopped a woman on her way to or from the clinic, you can politely ask her whether she is ok with that. If not, help her extract herself from it.
- Stopping to discuss our concerns with the protestors is a personal choice. This author, having tried this approach, believes it achieves nothing as they have closed minds. Indeed, some protestors seem to enjoy the argument and the attention. If you do choose to engage them, please keep very calm!!

We have received a variety of other thoughts about lawful direct action beyond what is described above - and some residents are keen to try them. Nothing is ruled out at this stage but we have decided for now to put our energies into making a success of the petition, which will strengthen the hand of local councillors in helping us.

MANAGING THE CAMPAIGN

We have formed a small, informal group of residents to manage the campaign. Our first decision was to hold back on presenting the petition at least until the Council meeting on 25th November, giving us good time to maximise support. But the Council knows it's coming!

Although there was an article in the last Twickenham Park Residents Association newsletter, this campaign is not run by TPRA and is independent of it. If you wrote to us following that newsletter, you will not have received a reply, as the email address was incorrect. Apologies, therefore, and please try again at the mail address below.

If you would like to work with us on the campaign, or if you simply have an idea you'd like to share, please email Philip at: reclaimrosslyn@gmail.com.

October 2014