

DORSET HOUSE NEWSLETTER

ParkgateAspen | 50 years 1975-2025

December 2025



INTERNAL REFURBISHMENT



Thank you for your patience and forbearance during the course of the upper floors refurbishment which is now close to final completion. As you will know from our earlier bulletins, there were problems with Axis's subcontractors who had fitted some front doors to non-compliant standards, and which had to be replaced by a new firm of subcontractors. Axis have done their best to recover lost time in the changeover and the supply chain of bespoke doors manufactured to the exacting standards of latest fire regulations and in keeping with the Listed Buildings Office requirements.

Axis are now installing the last batch of doors and dealing with snagging issues on a number of others. It would seem that some of the extra Banham security keys which were pre-ordered may not have not been delivered and if you are one of those residents affected, please inform Axis by email to lynda.prentice@axiseurope.com or notify the front desk.

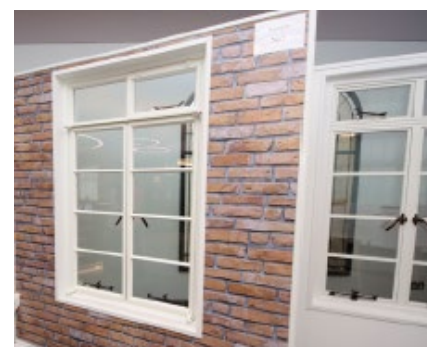
As part of the refurbishment, high-speed fibre broadband services have been run into the building along with new TV-Sat cabling for which you will soon be individually canvassed by Hyperoptic and BT for connection preferences and subscriptions where appropriate. All of this cabling runs through the metal corridor channels you see in this photo and are easily accessible now that we have used carpet tiles for the refurbishment.

NEXT STEPS

The next phase of internal works will comprise the replacement of front doors to ground floor flats to match those approved for the upper floors along with other safety measures mandated by the fire risk assessment. There is also the need to deal with the rear doors to flats leading onto the back staircases. These also must be brought up to FD30 standards but, obviously, not to the same aesthetic and costly standards as the front doors. We are also going to deal with the lobby carpeting and its pile reversal issue which makes the surface appear to be water stained, but is not.

EXTERNAL & WINDOWS

Work on the main staircases, behind the swing doors on each landing and down to ground level depends on Listing approval of upgraded swing doors and plans to replace the curtainwall glazing which runs the full height of each staircase. That project is included within Phase 1 (scheduled for 2026) of the external repairs specification being finalised by Consult-Construct, the building surveyors tasked with the external work as distinct from the Stewart Watson team who've been dealing with the internals.



On windows, it's important to bear in mind that the landlord's responsibility extends only to windows in the common parts – not private flats. However, Consult-Construct will also be assisting with the logistics of

subsequent phases (2027) of window replacements for those leaseholders who wish to replace their windows and French doors, with the benefit of scaffolding in place for the general external works.

As the external works will be carried out in phases, not all windows of a multi-aspect flat will be replaceable at the same time. Details of the work phases and budget prices will be published as soon as the plans are finalised by the professional team. The choice to repair or replace windows will be entirely down to each leaseholder, except where a frame has deteriorated to the extent of presenting a safety risk beneath.

Flat owners are not bound to sign-up with the landlord's contractor for their own windows when the time comes. However, any alternative window you contemplate will have to be pre-approved by Westminster, the Listed Buildings Officer and BSR (see below) and individually licensed by the landlord in terms of private scaffold access. Main external works contractors are loath to allow private workers onto their scaffolding – not least for reasons of insurance.

BUILDING SAFETY ACT

The post-Grenfell 'Building Safety Act' mandates that high rise blocks like Dorset House are registered with the new Building Safety Regulator [BSR] who became the new building control authority for all works and alterations in high-risk buildings. This has caused major upheaval with leaseholders across the country having to wait months for approval of basic building work or replacement of windows within flats in taller buildings. This is why the landlord's professional team are engaged in obtaining consent for Phase 1 communal window replacements at Dorset House, to save that burden of time and cost falling on leaseholders.

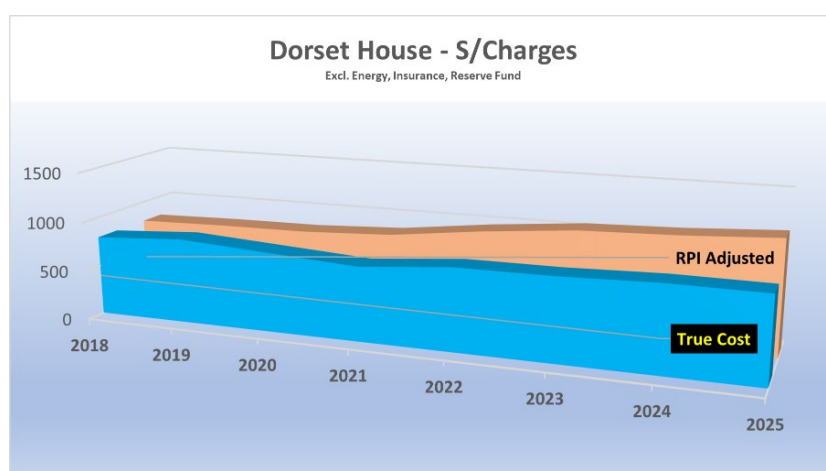
Another provision of the Act is the obligation for landlords to submit a 'Building Safety Case Report' to the BSR. This is a mammoth task mandating all manner of surveys way beyond issues of combustible building materials. It involves structural integrity, masonry and window corrosion tests, electrical safety, plumbing & drainage, weatherproofing, lift safety, firestopping & gap analysis, gas & boiler safety, lightning protection, fire alarm systems and of course the full gamut of fire safety considerations including emergency procedures (stay-put or evacuation) and a Resident Engagement Strategy.



It goes without saying that these surveys and studies are costly and those qualified and insured to produce them are now scarce. Costs for coordinating and filing a qualifying Building Safety Case Report run into the tens of thousands as quoted on numerous buildings within our management portfolio. This is why we chose to recruit our own inhouse building safety specialist, ex-Camden council, to deal with these mandated reports at a fraction of the cost of external providers. That process is now well underway for Dorset House.

SERVICE CHARGES

The service charge accounts for the year ended 30 September 2025 are now with the auditors. Our own management accounts show a further reduction in overall running costs; around 15% lower than 2022. If we exclude the volatile costs of energy and insurance, running costs turn out to be **only 6 percent more than 7 years ago** in 2018. This can be seen on the chart as well below the rate of inflation and despite the mandatory increases in minimum wage and payroll taxes. While reserve fund levies need to be maintained to fund the upcoming external works, we continue to keep day-to-day costs under tight control and review.



LETTINGS

In common with other boroughs, Westminster Council have introduced a Licensing Scheme which affects the letting of any flat to a single family or 2-person household. The regulations are very detailed and can be found on the [Westminster City Council website](#) Unlicensed lettings are liable to very heavy fines and tenants may be entitled to a refund of rents already paid.

Don't forget that there are also registration requirements under your lease, by which you need to provide us with a copy of the tenancy agreement within 1 month of any letting. Airbnb or similar short lets are not permitted. Lettings should be for minimum terms of 6 months.



The new licensing requirements do not apply to HMOs (houses in multiple occupation – e.g. 3 or more persons sharing common kitchen or bathroom facilities) which mandate far more serious compliance. However, as you should know by now, **HMOs are not permitted** in Dorset House. The council routinely copies HMO licences to the landlord, and these are automatically referred to their solicitors for breach and forfeiture proceedings. So, please inform your letting agents of these regulations before you become liable for unexpected costs. Dorset House is not a dormitory building, and residents don't want it abused as such.

FIRE SAFETY

With over 300 people living in Dorset House any night of the week, everyone has a responsibility to take fire safety seriously for themselves and their neighbours. This means ensuring that there is at least 1 functioning smoke alarm, preferably located in the entrance hallway of the flat. It means not leaving candles lit in unoccupied rooms, not overloading plug sockets and keeping a fire blanket near your cooking range.



Plug-in air fresheners and coiled extension leads present a fire risk as do rechargeable lithium batteries of questionable origin. If you use a tumble dryer, please do not leave it running while you are out. Such basic precautions can save lives. Electric scooters and skateboards are not allowed in the building.

Aside from fire, there are other safety considerations. If there are small children living in your flat, please fit window restrictors which cost little money and are easy to fit. Please do not allow children to use the lifts unaccompanied. If you see anything that presents a safety risk, please do let the concierge staff know.

ALTERATIONS

If you are new to Dorset House and want to carry out refurbishment works, it's essential that plans are sent in advance to the landlord's building surveyor. Send these to ed@mbsconsultants.co.uk with an undertaking for preliminary costs in reviewing your proposals. Unlicensed building works or solid floor installations can result in costly proceedings for reinstatement to their original state. All residents expect protection from unauthorised works above or adjacent to their flats, whether in terms of leaks and damage or undue disturbance. So, we respectfully ask for everyone's cooperation with the regulations.

LEASE EXTENSION

Around a third of all flats in the building are now on new 250-year leases. These provide for service charges to be based on a realistic budget for the forthcoming year rather than being based on the previous year's expenditure, with a large balancing charge arising when the accounts are published. This was a major disadvantage to flat owners still on the old leases during the energy cost spikes two years ago. Annual service charge budgets make bills more predictable and take the shocks out of the system. For those who have already extended their old leases, the cost of upgrading to the 250-year lease may amount to little more than the legal costs. When we are asked for sales packs, a common question is: 'Are they on the new lease or the old lease?' - so it's clearly becoming significant in the market. To upgrade just email: legal@parkaspen.co.uk