



FRIENDS OF KENWOOD PRESS RELEASE

VOLUNTEERING AND EXPERTISE BRING A KING'S BIRTHDAY HONOUR TO KENWOOD

The Friends of Kenwood are delighted to announce that Mark King has been awarded an MBE by His Majesty the King in the Birthday Honours List published on 13 June 2026.

The official citation recognises Mark King: 'Fellow of the Institute of Tourist Guiding, Life Fellow and lately Chair of the British Guild of Tourist Guides. For services to Tourism.'

With a proven track record in international marketing communications and business development on behalf of leading consumer and professional services brands, and lately through his successful career as a Blue Badge Tourist Guide, Mark brings extensive first-hand experience of the national tourist sector.

As a Volunteer supporting English Heritage at Kenwood House since it reopened after a major restoration and refurbishment programme in 2013, Mark has become well-known to the Kenwood community. Over and above his core role in welcoming visitors and animating the display rooms, he has helped to develop and deliver highlights tours of the house and a growing portfolio of Spotlight Talks that focus on an object in the collections, or a story connected with Kenwood's history.

Volunteers play an essential part in adding value to the visitor experience at national heritage treasures such as Kenwood. English Heritage now has a roster of more than 500 Volunteers at Kenwood, the largest team in its national collection of 400 sites.

Mark's commitment and passion for Kenwood is deeply rooted in his enjoyment of the grounds, refreshment facilities, architecture and fine art collections since his childhood. In due course, this led to him being elected as a Trustee of the Friends of Kenwood. Mark gives his time generously to work with English Heritage and the Friends of Kenwood to foster the local community's deep affection for and engagement with all aspects of the Iveagh Bequest at Kenwood.

As we approach the centenary of the Earl of Iveagh's most generous gift to the nation, the challenge of taking Kenwood forward as a world-class fine art collection and valued local amenity without the security of significant public funding has never been more urgent.

Working in partnership with English Heritage and the Friends of Kenwood, Mark is helping to attract new visitors and increase repeat visits – by local residents, other UK national visitors, and international tourists. This was proven in 2025 - a key year for Kenwood due to a commercially successful exhibition of John Singer Sargent's portraits of American heiresses. A second, smaller display of two very similar paintings – one definitively attributed to Jan Vermeer, the other of less certain provenance – also created opportunities to bring in new visitors and increase dwell time on site. These exhibitions demonstrate how volunteers with useful commercial skills add significant value to the local visitor economy and hard-pressed heritage organisations. English Heritage is

fortunate to be able to harness the considerable skills of its volunteers, and Kenwood, in particular, is lucky to have people of such calibre.

Chair of the Friends of Kenwood, Dame Jenny Abramsky, GBE, said: “This honour recognises the importance of Tourism to the UK economy, and illustrates how it can be combined with dedication to the preservation of heritage and the cultural sector. We offer Mark our warm congratulations.”

Mark King, MBE, said: “I am proud beyond words to be honoured with this award of an MBE.

I am passionate about what I choose to do with my time, ideas and expertise. On entering what - amusingly - I once thought would be ‘retirement’, I find today that I have never been busier with various forms of community service. It is incredibly rewarding for me to spend time at Kenwood working together on how to achieve its full potential, and to help strengthen the market profile and resilience of the country’s tourist guides holding professional qualifications

It came as a great surprise to be singled out in this way when so many other colleagues serve selflessly and with impressive determination to help Britain’s Tourism and heritage sectors to thrive in these exciting, if challenging times.

I wish to thank those who nominated me at the Institute of Tourist Guiding, the British Guild of Tourist Guides and the Friends of Kenwood. I also wish particularly to acknowledge the inspiration and professional formation provided by course tutors preparing me for the London Blue Badge and City of London Green Badge qualifications.”

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- About Mark King

Mark lives in Finchley, his three adult children live in London, Osaka (Japan) and Arlington VA (USA). After graduating from the University of Oxford, he worked in advertising mainly with Saatchi & Saatchi, based at various times in London, New York, Prague, St Petersburg and Moscow. Mark then moved into in-house roles leading marketing teams for leading corporate and commercial law firms based in the City of London. He qualified as a Blue Badge tourist guide in 2010.

<https://britainsbestguides.org/guides/mark-king/>
www.linkedin.com/in/markbking/

- The Friends of Kenwood (The Friends of the Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood) provide a voice for supporters and work to promote and preserve Kenwood House, its collection and estate for future generations.

Registered charity no. 273258
www.friendsofkenwood.org.uk

Contact: Helen Payne, Membership Secretary & Development, info@friendsofkenwood.org.uk or 07775 894146

- English Heritage cares for over 400 historic buildings, monuments and sites - from world-famous prehistoric sites to grand medieval castles, from Roman forts on the edges of the empire to a Cold War bunker. Through these, the story of England is brought to life for over 10 million people each year.

Registered charity no. 1140351
www.english-heritage.org.uk

- The permanent collection at Kenwood, its breathtaking interiors and stunning world-class architecture and art, including Rembrandt's 'Self-Portrait with Two Circles', is free to visit all year round.
- Tourism's GDP impact in the UK totalled £147 billion, or 5% of the national economy, in 2024. Tourism contributes at least 4% to GDP across all regions and nations in the UK. Tourism demonstrates its importance as a major employer, supporting nearly one in every 15 jobs across the UK, about 2.4 million jobs. The industry's value extends beyond major cities accounting for at least 5% of jobs in every region and nation of Britain. Tourism generated £52 billion in tax revenues for the UK Government in 2024. (Source: Visit Britain www.visitbritain.org/research-insights/economic-value-tourism)

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Tourist guides have been described as 'the rock on which Tourism is built.'