

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

COUNCIL CONSULTS ON CIVIC SPACES



City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) is to launch a major consultation about the use of public spaces across the capital (see our website 20.1.15, and Issue 237).

The results, and discussions afterwards, will determine a Public Spaces Manifesto, setting out the style, frequency and management of activities in various open areas (not including parks and green spaces).

From June until autumn 2016, part of that consultation will involve trial arrangements in the pedestrianised but currently under-used Castle Street. 'The trial,' says a Report to the Environment Committee, 'will allow the Council to test the strengths and weaknesses of a more prescriptive approach'.

Individuals, businesses, community councils, festival and event organisers, Council services, and Business Improvement Districts will all be consulted.

Roddy Smith, the new chief executive of Essential Edinburgh (EE) – addressed the New Town and Broughton Community Council last month. Unapologetic (bullish even) about EE's performance, he expressed a keen interest in shaping the future of Castle Street.

Spurtle fervently hopes that any Manifesto and trial arrangements will, on the contrary, rein in such commercially driven enthusiasm.

Remembering the 5-month morass in St Andrew Square and the wind whistling through empty greenhouses on George Street, many have doubts about EE's good judgement. Such sceptics say decision making about public property should remain in public hands, and be accountable enough for any mistakes to be quickly rectified.

LEITH WALK UPS AND DOWNS

CEC last month published proposals for the Pilrig St–McDonald Rd leg of the Leith Walk upgrade, writes Tim Smith.

Overall aims for a better pedestrian environment and safer cycling routes were generally welcomed, but Greener Leith and Spokes were less enthusiastic about details. Both suggested constructive improvements.

Of concern were:

- On either side of the Walk, proposed cycle routes don't adequately overlap the ends of the section to provide continuity in both directions. Also, segregated cycle paths on existing pavements are not parallel to the kerb but veer around bus stops and bin bays. Such complexity could cause conflict with pedestrians, especially if a slight level-change is also proposed. Leith Central Community Council (LCCC) calls this 'mad'.

- Southbound, the proposals look promising, needing only minor design tweaks. (Continued on page 2)

NATURALISTS SHELL-SHOCKED BY NON-NATIVE IN WARRISTON



Water of Leith Conservation Trust volunteer Steve Morrison photographed this terrapin basking in the sunshine beside Warriston Road on 12 June. 'To be honest, we have never seen this before and do not know its impact', WLCT told us later. 'They/it would not be able to breed as it's too cold, we're sure. But it's not good news. If caught, we would try to find its owner or rehome it. We approached the city's biodiversity officer for advice and River Forth Fisheries Trust – both of whom were very surprised too.' It hasn't been a great summer so far. Are you too cold to breed? We'd welcome readers' observations.

'SANDY HILL' STRUGGLE RESUMES

Locals reacted swiftly last month to a new application to develop the 'Sandy Hill' behind 32 and 62 Broughton Road (Ref. 15/02335/FUL).

Sir Frank Mears Associates, acting for Virgin Islands-based Provincial Property Holding Ltd, propose 8 semi-detached, 3-storey, 4-bedroom townhouses in 4 blocks. Heavy reinforcement of the site's steep and unstable slope, including a 4–5m-high wall adjacent to neighbouring back-greens would be required (see our website 1.6.15).

No voices were raised in favour of the proposal at a meeting held on 4 June. Around 25 residents discussed grounds for objection after a helpful introduction to the Planning process by Ward 12 councillor Nick Gardner.

At the last count over 100 objections had already been lodged, meaning the proposal will probably go before the Planning subcommittee.

Arguments against the plan, for which the deadline was 26 June, included loss of local amenity, damage to wildlife, and inadequate access for emergency and delivery vehicles. New Town &

Broughton Community Council will oppose the plan. A decision could come late this month, but is more likely to drag on until August at the earliest.



Briefly



The new clock for **Broughton St** (Issue 240) has now been installed outside a newly painted **L'Escargot Bleu**. Very smart they are too.

LCCC wants CEC to impose stricter conditions on how building sites are managed. Developments at Haddington Place and Shrub Place have variously displaced pedestrians to gutters, **leaked effluent** into the street, and covered neighbours in a **blizzard of polystyrene**.

Volunteers from the **11th Edinburgh North East (Broughton St Mary's) Scouts** reunited around 2,000 bags with their owners following the **Edinburgh Marathon** on 31 May. Event organisers said afterwards that the Scouts' efforts had contributed to the **'smoothest finish area on record'**.

The **Scottish Government** will belatedly request Westminster to devolve responsibility for **punishing parking on pavements**. Former MP Mark Lazarowicz made this change possible with a Private Members' Bill in 2014.

Arrivals and departures. Abstract artist Tommy Fitchet has flitted. His colourful **Saorsa Gallery** has headed west from Rodney St to 8 Deanhaugh St in Stockbridge. Meanwhile, the **Edinburgh Gallery** has opened at 20a Dundas St. **Rodney St News** has gone belly-up, another local newsagent unable to compete in an age of 'local' supermarkets. We hear a sandwich shop may replace it. **The Bakehouse** on Broughton St is now under new management. **Spitaki**, a Greek taverna, has opened to great acclaim on E. Claremont St.

Reader **Colette Matheson** opened a can of worms when she wrote to us last month asking how to pronounce Broughton: **Browton? Brawton? Bruffton?** The first syllable should, of course, rhyme with cough. See our website (8.6.15).

LCCC always feared the new **Shrub Place** development would be too high and too massive, but CEC Planners disagreed. Now that **Ziggurat's development** is taking shape, LCCC feels it has been proved right and wants officials to **change the way they judge** such proposals in future.

Cross-party, cross-legged locals could use the new **Community Empowerment Act** to acquire the WCs at Canonmills, earmarked for closure. It should not be too hard to make them a going concern.

Leith Walk ups and downs *(Continued from page 1)*

•Northbound, proposed junctions at McDonald Rd and Pilrig St have, disappointingly, been scaled back from earlier designs, despite hopes that extra government investment would mean high-quality cycling provision, including priority at junctions. Cyclists don't use segregated paths if they're too fragmented, too convoluted or involve giving way at junctions; faster on-road alternatives are preferred.

See Spokes' submission at: [<http://goo.gl/K8dvGn>].

LCCC is also concerned by a lack of pedestrian crossings on the section, which would additionally serve to limit traffic speed. With the exception of a pedestrian crossing at Pilrig St, they say the plans are not pedestrian-friendly enough.

Contrasting views on see-through window

A group of Barony St residents are fuming about a new house next to their back garden, and CEC's handling of their complaints.

They objected to removal of a boundary wall adjacent to their communal garden, accessed from Barony Place. Storage of building materials had ruined that area, they said, and a gate was damaged.

They were particularly unhappy that a window overlooking the garden was eventually installed using clear glass not an obscure-glazed block.

A Planning official responded that ownership of the wall and damage to the gate were civil matters. Similarly, officials had no power to demand restoration of damaged grass.

Materials for the window were not specified in the plans, said the official, so were not enforceable. However, he conceded that: 'Since the original development was granted consent in 1999, the planning authority has become aware of instances where there may be issues with enforcement as a result of failures to appropriately condition materials on approved drawings. As a result procedures and training have been introduced to prevent situations such as this arising again'. No undue leniency had been shown, he concluded, and proper monitoring had continued throughout.

Linda Joyce, speaking for the disgruntled, still disputes this interpretation of events and questions officials' decision making. Whilst welcoming changes to procedures and training, she says 'It's a shame it has come too late to benefit the Barony Street residents'.



Bus route needs shake-up, say parents

Parents, carers and pupils at St Mary's Primary School are protesting at the number of Lothian Buses on East London Street.

They say buses increasingly used the route during tramworks, but have continued to do so since, especially when returning off-shift to the depot on Annandale Street.

They allege that queues of buses sometimes build up outside the school, polluting the air. And that buses travelling over the speed bumps make the building shake, causing even more lumps of masonry to drop off it than usual.

A Lothian Buses spokesperson told *Spurtil*: 'We have not received any direct complaints regarding our usage of East London Street, which is an operational requirement of our business. However, we will look into this matter in greater detail to see if there is anything that can be done to alleviate the concerns of the local community.'

'The speed bumps and traffic management in place on East London Street serve to prevent any vehicle from speeding. However, we will remind our drivers of the importance of driving to suit the surrounding conditions, with safety as the utmost priority'.

Category A-listed fudge

James Wilson is busily working to restore and refurbish the former Margiotta's premises at 71-75 Northumberland Street. He plans to open his new yoga studio here later in the summer, but has much internal work to do first to conserve and improve the Category A-listed building's condition.

Reid and Sibbald's design dates from 1802, but many changes have occurred since, resulting in a number of baffling anomalies. Take, for example, this door. Complete with locks and letterbox, it leads to a narrow and inaccessible balcony at 21 Howe Street. Now look at the shape of the stonework above. It clearly doesn't fit. One theory is that the original developer was torn between choosing a residential or retail use at ground-floor level, and what resulted was a kind of compromise. Another is that the door was originally connected to the pavement by its own set of steps. We'll bring you more on this restoration drama in the weeks to come.



Edinburgh Art Festival taster

An empty shop in the St James Centre will become one of the venues for this year's Edinburgh Art Festival, which begins on 30 July, writes *Rhys Fullerton*. Video works by Emma Finn seem like the perfect fit for a location on the brink of transformation. Her work is described as darkly humorous and transports us to uncomfortable liminal places that sit somewhere between reality and invention.

Starting on 11 July is an exhibition by France-Lise McGurn, one of Collective's contributions to the festival. McGurn's themes include identity construction, gender portrayal, juvenile delinquency and the ephemera of social communion, which take the form of collected imagery and moving-image files.

Broughton will not be short of diverse modern art this summer. Look out for an in-depth preview of the festival online later in July.

EDINBURGH
ART
FESTIVAL

Look out for: Raptors

Fortunately (or perhaps sadly), we don't have a Jurassic Park-style problem in Broughton, but we do have the smaller feathered descendants of those scary predators who have if anything improved their speed, agility and brilliant eyesight, adding a mastery of flight to their hunting repertoire. The largest is the Buzzard, with an impressive wingspan of up to 4ft (1.5m). We're not sure what they're feeding on, but they seem to be one of the few things that get the resident crows and gulls in a flap.

How to see them: Over the summer they use warm thermals generated over the city to climb high into the sky and look for prey. Keep an eye out next time you're lying in the garden or park. They resemble small brown eagles and give out a less than impressive whistling 'peeooow' for a bird of their size. Alternatively, robbed of their height advantage, they're often mobbed and pursued by agitated local birds, which gives their presence away.

Also look out for: Sparrow Hawks: agile, low-level Exocets that snatch birds (up to the size of a pigeon) using long, nimble, hooked talons. Finally, we're also in the patrol zone of the superlative Peregrine Falcon who, like the Buzzard, works from height and launches attacks at blistering speeds on other birds in flight. — *Miles Forde*



Image: Oliver Wolters, Creative Commons <https://goo.gl/BqBvOi>

Head to Head is capital show

The current Head to Head exhibition of sculpture in the Portrait Gallery is a miracle of presentation and representation. More than that, it is a tour-de-force by curator Imogen Gibbon.

The works shown range from the 1st century BC to 2004, and from a thumb by Baldaccini to Epstein's majestic 'Risen Christ'. Star names include Dürer, Canova and Rodin. Thirteen materials used include: green granite, coloured wax, burnt matches and glue, fibreglass with rope, and ceramic with glazed slip.

Space permits only a few special Scottish mentions for Glenys Barton's exquisite 1991 rendering of Jean Muir, fashion designer; Gerald Laing's 'Galina 3' of his wife; and Alan Main's bravura bronze of poet Norman McCaig. See our website (1.7.15).



Image: Emilio Greco, Anna (1954). © Estate of E. Greco.

WARD 12 BY-ELECTION

The chief returning officer has scheduled a Ward 12 (Leith Walk) by-election for 10 September.

The move follows SNP Councillor Deidre Brock's standing down on 22 June after eight years in the job. She did not believe it was 'practical or possible' to continue as both a councillor and (newly elected) MP (see our website 24.6.15).

In her letter of resignation, Brock thanked City of Edinburgh Council's chief executive Sue Bruce and other officials, paid tribute to colleagues, and said it had been 'a privilege' to serve the people of Leith Walk.

To register to vote or apply for a postal vote, contact the Electoral Registration Office (or Tel. 344 2500) by 25 August.

Briefly



'Daisy is 3 years older than her sister Heidi. The sum of the squares of their ages in years is 317. How old are Daisy and Heidi?' If questions like this make you feel (1) nauseated (2) panicky (3) confused (4) inadequate (5) inclined to throttle Daisy and Heidi, you are not alone. However, no such difficulties afflicted **four very bright Drummond CHS pupils** who were crowned Lothian Enterprising Maths champions last month. Congratulations to Katherine Dempsie, Mhairi Dickie, Matthew Farrow and Benjamin Sterratt who saw off **27 other schools** and now go forward to the national finals. More on this story (and more horrible questions) on our website (16.6.15).

Those concerned by **street drinking** and **anti-social behaviour** in Big Foot country at the top of Broughton St are urged to tell **Ian Buchanan** of the City Centre Neighbourhood Partnership at [ian.buchanan@edinburgh.gov.uk] and Police Scotland's Area Commander for Central Edinburgh **Rob Paris** at [http://goo.gl/jsnTBV]. Public pressure could lead to the area being designated a no-boozing zone like Hunter Sq in the Old Town.

Following a **spate of break-ins** at commercial premises on **Dundas St, Eyre Place** and **Rodney St**, New Town & Broughton Community Council is urgently seeking to quantify the problem of theft in this area. Some locals feel **too few police in the city centre** means even incompetent crooks are finding crime pays, particularly on Sundays and Mondays. **Tell NTBCC** at: [http://goo.gl/3tdQvI].

A **glass-half-full Labour supporter** has taken issue with our election coverage last month. Whilst not disputing our claim that Mark Lazarowicz's share of the vote **fell by 6.2% compared to 2010**, he wished to make clear that the total number of votes Mr Lazarowicz received had **risen by 1,000**.

CEC will allow **all traffic to use bus lanes** except at peak times during a 9-month experiment. **Leith Walk, Leith Street** and **York Place** will be affected. Green councillors **Bagshaw** and **Booth**, and Green MSP **Alison Johnstone** were strongly critical of this 'disappointing' and 'backward' step.

Moreover ...



Yet another attempt to upgrade the so-called garage on E. Scotland St Lane, this time for use as a so-called 'studio office', has failed (Ref. 15/00700/FUL). Planning officials said the application would 'cumulatively and detrimentally' affect the amenity of nearby residents and that office use would 'not preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area'. See our website (16.6.15).

John Ross Maclean recommends a 'superb basement garden and trompe l'oeil' at 6-8 York Place, by the Academy of Chinese Medicine and York Barber. Does any reader know **who is responsible** and how to contact them?



Twelve-year-old Stockbridge Primary School pupil **Cameron Searle** (front left) was overall winner in an Edinburgh-wide cookery competition held in Broughton last month. The challenge – set by local restaurant **The Riparian Rooms** and open to young people aged 8-15 across the city – was to produce a Festival-themed dish using no more than five local and Scottish ingredients. It had to be made within a budget of £5 and serve 3-4 people. Cameron's winning '**Summer Symphony**' was crispy pork belly coated with fennel seeds and served with steamed spring greens, celeriac and a sweet potato purée. It will now feature on The Riparian Rooms menu. Judges included head chef **Gary Cromie** (back right), owner **Neil Robb** (centre), and ubiquitous mouth **Grant Stott**.

Spurtle Team: J. Dickie, M. Forde, R. Fullerton, M. Hart, D. Hill, D. Jackson Young, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, C. Roussot, L. Rynne, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith. Post: Spurtle, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ. Printed by Minuteman Press, 63 Elm Row.

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Alison Johnstone MSP for Lothian Region



On the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month during term time I hold a surgery for Lothian residents at the Scottish Parliament between 11am and 1pm.

Please call to book a surgery appointment or to arrange another time and venue that is convenient for you.

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