

# Spurtle



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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER** Free

## PICARDY PLACE PLANS HAVE LOCALS IN A SPIN

Plans for the redesign of Picardy Place came to light in August. They show a projected building at the centre of a large 3-lane traffic gyratory and tram/bus interchange, with the area of sheltered greenery in front of the Cathedral steps drastically reduced (see: [goo.gl/QsQKgs](http://goo.gl/QsQKgs)).

The plans – hitherto unavailable to the public for reasons of commercial sensitivity – emerged after selected stakeholders were belatedly asked for their opinions in July. Lobbyists Spokes and Living Streets later shared their detailed memories of the plans online.

Whilst considering them an improvement on the current layout, both groups were disappointed by the plans. They responded with calls for: less traffic space, more active travel and public-realm space; road junctions instead of the gyratory; separate and adequately spacious routes for cyclists and walkers; retention of more of the existing green space and mature trees.

*Spurtle* finds the lack of opportunity for effective feedback from more people earlier on appalling. We therefore applaud Leith Cllr Chas Booth, whose successful motion last month demanded a consultation, which will begin on 23 September. A report looking at how decisions have been reached so far, and outlining opportunities for traffic reduction and improvements to active traffic infrastructure, will go before the Transport Committee on 5 October. But surely, this is too little, too late.

'This process of making decisions about sensitive matters of public interest with scant or meaningless consultation is not the way I want our council to be operating,' writes City Centre Cllr Claire Miller.

'People have valuable ideas, contributions, and requirements that the Council should listen to and act upon during an open and genuine consultation process.'



## WILL EDINBURGH EMBRACE THE GREAT OUTDOORS?

The unelected Ross Development Trust's unelected panel has appointed an unelected team to revamp West Princes St Gardens and create a new bandstand in a £25m project. The public did not ask for it, were not consulted in advance, and their opinions later played no formal role in the decision-making process. Welcome to the wonderful world of planning democracy.

The collaboration will be led by US-based design practice wHY. (Supply your own punctuation.) You can read about their concept here: [[goo.gl/r3Db9Q](http://goo.gl/r3Db9Q)].

*Spurtle* remains sceptical about an 8k-seat outdoor rock venue in a formerly tranquil park in the middle of a northern city not noted for its balmy weather or success at preserving/regrowing grass.

The terms and conditions for the venue's frequency of use, access restrictions, and how any profits will be divided between Council and private operators will need careful scrutiny further down the line. As will the final designs when the developer seeks planning permission. For trenchant observations by the Cockburn Association chair Cliff Hague, see [[goo.gl/yXEZ6E](http://goo.gl/yXEZ6E)].



## BROUGHTON BACKS LOCAL GOOD CAUSES



Broughton Street traders raised £1,700 in their inaugural Midsummer Raffle, which began on 24 June. The grand total was divided afterwards among three local charities: The Yard, The Rock Trust, and Waverley Care. Pictured above, Anna York from Curiouser & Curiouser hands over a cheque to Waverley Care's Radi Ivanov and Karen Docwra. 'This is a staggering amount of money to raise,' a grateful Docwra told us afterwards. 'We were completely bowled over by the generosity of the shops that donated prizes and by everyone who bought tickets. What a lovely community to be part of!'

## DECISION TIME ON OLD ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL HOTEL



By the time you read this, councillors on the Development Management Subcommittee, meeting on 31 Aug, will probably have reached a decision on the revised proposal by Duddingston House Properties and Urbanist Group to convert the old Royal High School into a luxury hotel.

Showing no consideration for *Spurtle* deadlines, the decision will have been made just too late for us to report it here. Instead, see our online coverage, and for reasons to support the alternative music-school proposal, go here: [[goo.gl/6MrbXM](http://goo.gl/6MrbXM)].

Council officials recommended rejecting the hotel scheme, saying 'The proposed interventions ... would have a significant adverse impact on the architectural integrity, composition and special character of one of the UK's finest listed buildings' (Ref. 17/00588/FUL).

Whatever the Council's decision, this is not the last of it. The increasingly acrimonious and legally fraught argument will continue before the Scottish Government in due course.

## Briefly



This **repetitively eye-catching** matrix has appeared in the Rodney St Tunnel. Alternating **Vs for Victory and Cuckold's horns** suggest the artist (#handsforhorns) is a **randy Taurean** with a fine conceit of his own irresistibility.

Police attending the New Town & Broughton Community Council last month reported a **spike in 'nuisance buskers'** performing after 10pm in the city centre. **Sounds painful.** Invoking Section 54 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, miscreants are first issued with a yellow warning card, then **spot-fined £40** if caught again within 48 hours. If caught again after that, **'their equipment may be removed'**. Sounds even more painful.

Leith Central Community Council has **unanimously agreed** to support the Save London Road Church campaign for a community buy-out of the vacant property.



CEC officials backed developers of the **Sandy Hill site** last month. Investigating complaints from neighbours, they found that **considerable earthworks** did not represent a breach of planning control because they were needed to provide 'a stable platform for plant and machinery' (see [goo.gl/6DAzLk](http://goo.gl/6DAzLk)). Meanwhile, **10 very compact grass-roofed studios** are proposed for the nearby former car park opening onto Broughton Road behind Claremont Cres (Ref. 13/03603/FUL). Locals are monitoring carefully, not least since **access arrangements** here could, in theory, have implications for access to the Sandy Hill site (see [goo.gl/rCWRGB](http://goo.gl/rCWRGB)).

Edinburgh state-school pupils will enjoy an **Autumn holiday** on 18 Sept and a **mid-term break** from 16 to 23 Oct.

Planning permission is sought for 11 flats in **Gayfield Sq**, replacing the former garages, galleries and art studios there (Ref. 17/03392; see [goo.gl/pliMsA](http://goo.gl/pliMsA)). Across the road, **St Mary's Primary School** is emerging resplendent and Ship of Theseus-like from scaffolding after **extensive and long overdue repairs** to exterior stonework.

## St Andrew Square Garden in the balance?

These are contentious times for St Andrew Square Garden.

Many people loved the return to comparatively uncluttered, green tranquillity over the summer. It felt like a quiet triumph against the odds for peace-lovers over braying, cackling, amplified, commercial interests. Locals, shoppers and visitors found a welcome respite here from the frenzy of Festival and Fringe. A place to take stock, relax, not spend.

Inevitably, there has been a backlash from thwarted entrepreneurs and their apologists in the Council.

CEC's new culture-culture-in-chief, Donald Wilson, wants a return of comedy shows and shack architecture in 2018. He thinks this year's use of the Garden as a garden was a wasted 'resource'. Where's the value in a space that doesn't try to wring the last dry retch of a chuckle, the last grubby fiver from a transient audience?

Back in February, it seemed St Andrew Square property owners had seen the light. Standard Life, speaking through Essential Edinburgh, said: 'Everyone agrees that St Andrew Square Garden is a superb, green space in the heart of the city to be enjoyed by local people, visitors and those who work in the city centre all year round.'

Back then, they were in favour, they said, at 'appropriate times of year', of animating the Garden with 'high quality activity that will not adversely impact on the look and feel of the space' and be designed 'to minimise disruption'.

More recently, a Standard Life spokeswoman has told the *Evening News* (8 August), they mean to 'put together a planned programme for the entire year ... which does not impact on the intended use of the gardens'. Hmm ... OK, but be careful.

Now for the worrying bit. 'We are also discussing creating permanent infrastructure, something that could work for those putting on events and not impact the use of the square'. *Spurtle* seeks urgent clarification.

In the meantime, New Town & Broughton Community Council is writing to Standard Life congratulating and thanking them for this summer's return to sanity. Long may it last.

## Not footloose, not fancy-free

Rumours that Paolozzi's three-piece *The Manuscript of Monte Cassino* will move permanently to Hillside Crescent Gardens have proved wide of the mark.

Alarm spread when plans of the new layout appeared on Leith Central Community Council's website on 13 August [[goo.gl/8eqp43](http://goo.gl/8eqp43)]. It seemed the Council had reached a decision without consulting first. As if.

In fact, a *temporary* move of this kind is one option being considered. It would allow the public to enjoy the sculptures whilst keeping them safe during works to reconfigure Picardy Place's road layout. Their removal would also improve access for contractors.

CEC's Transport, Economic Development, Culture, and Parks and Greenspaces Departments are discussing the matter with representatives of the Paolozzi Foundation and St Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral, the original donor Sir Tom Farmer, and the Friends of Inspiring Hillside. The latter – already enthused by the possible arrival of a new static exercise bike here – are particularly excited at the prospect. No final decision has yet been made, but when it *is* the Transport and Culture & Communities conveners will be involved.

Relocating sculptures can be difficult, especially when their original sites are intimately bound up with their meaning. The Gormleys awaiting return to the Water of Leith are an example.

In the case of *Manuscript*, the pieces – a rumination on faith, the religious life, learning, war, origins and belonging – stand at the top of the hill between Paolozzi's childhood home on Crown Place and St Mary's. Picardy Place, Greenside and Elm Row have long been associated with Edinburgh's Italian population.

Therefore, this internationally significant, compound artwork cannot be shifted permanently to the nearest convenient spot without disparaging its context and diminishing its point. To do so would be, at best, inept and at worst an act of cultural vandalism. If the alternative requires scaling back the hubristic ambitions of road designers, so be it. Perhaps that could be another useful contribution to Edinburgh of this thought-provoking work. — AM



## Twenty-twenty vision

Congratulations to Sharon Nugent's Narcissus emporium at 87 Broughton Street.

Twenty years ago at Festival time, Sharon established the flower shop in what is now Concrete Wardrobe. It was a modest venture but with a burgeoning vision and ambition. Broughton Street has often been noted as a charm of infinite variety, so it was no surprise that Calum Buchanan's Just Junk across the road metamorphosed into the Narcissus *de nos jours*.

Now, together with its inspiring offshoot, the Narcissus Flower School in East Norton Place, Sharon's enterprise embraces its third decade with a growing reputation as one of Edinburgh and Lothian's most superlative repositories of floral art. *Floreat Narcissus!* — JRM



## Look out for: House Sparrows

These noisy, sociable, finch-like birds are so ubiquitous that they sometimes seem hardly worth mentioning, but this is not the case.

Birds provide us with a very visible marker to unseen changes in our environment. House Sparrow populations have dropped in some areas of England by as much as 70%. In Scotland the situation is not quite as severe, but the obvious decline here remains a worry, not least as the reasons for it are unclear.

Improved standards of insulation and good house-keeping within the city are likely explanations. Sparrows nest in gaps in roofing and walls and will often nest socially, so such sites are perhaps increasingly difficult to find in our tidier buildings. Although House Sparrows will drift onto agricultural land, they are closely tied to our streets and gardens, and so very visible to us. The Sparrows' range however is not large, making them vulnerable to change.

Sparrows are noisy and will often congregate in particular dense bushes where they commune before bursting out and heading for another spot. This charming habit, which is also not fully understood, is well worth watching; the first clue being the sheer racket coming from some random shrubbery, often with little sign of any birds in it.

There is quite a difference between the sexes. In spring the strong chestnut and grey head with a black bib makes the males particularly conspicuous as they prepare for the breeding season. Historically, Sparrows were looked on with disapproval as they were believed to be promiscuous. Recently, science has debunked that myth, stating that Sparrows are every bit as faithful to their partners as humans.

In any event, it is to be hoped that these fellow city dwellers can make a speedy population recovery and once again grace our streets and gardens in their former numbers. — Miles Forde



Image: Jo Ravi, Creative Commons, CC-BY-SA 3.0

## Council considers Festival and Fringe

A motion by City Centre Cllr Joanna Mowat was accepted at a full meeting of the Council on 24 August.

Whilst welcoming the 'twin blessings' of Edinburgh's setting and arts festival, Mowat noted that CEC has 'a duty to respond to the impact of visitors on the city of which we have stewardship.

'Council therefore calls for a report within 2 cycles exploring how we can work transparently and accountably with partners (to include festivals, businesses, residents, police, relevant functions and arms-length external organisations of the council) to improve the visitor and resident experience and address the challenges to ensure that the city can offer a positive experience for visitors and residents.'

At the same meeting, Cllr Lesley Marion Cameron's motion was accepted, calling for a report into how conditions can be attached to CEC grant funding and venue provision during the Fringe. These conditions are those drawn up in a Fair Hospitality Charter drawn up by the Unite union.

They concern: paying the real living wage; no 'trial' shifts; rest breaks; equal pay for young workers; minimum-hours contracts; anti-sexual harassment policies; paid transport after 12am; consulting on rota changes; ensuring 100% of tips go to workers; allowing trade-union access and representation.



## Briefly



Leith St's 10-month closure to motor vehicles begins on 2 Sept. Pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicles will still be allowed through. Traffic planners optimistically calculate that diversion routes via London Rd and the Mound will delay buses by only 6 minutes, whilst actually increasing total capacity. Time will tell. Hopefully, many drivers will find permanent alternatives to bringing cars into/through the city centre.

Police have recently reported over 100 cabs to the Edinburgh Taxi Inspector for forming an illegal rank outside the Balmoral Hotel.

Have you or a loved one been surprised recently by a big pink chicken at the corner of E. London and Broughton Sts? It stands in an upstairs window and throws water bombs at passers-by. If the answer is yes and you haven't been overdoing the Pimms lately, the explanation probably lies in a 30-second video uploaded to YouTube by Food Standards Scotland. The assailant illustrates their point that 'Nothing ruins summer like pink chicken': [goo.gl/hBRp6W].

Phase 4 of the Leith Walk Programme (Iona St to McDonald Rd) will resume on 4 Sept and finish on 4 Nov. As part of this, the contractor's compound will shift to Brunswick St and all side-streets will briefly close. Phase 5 (McDonald Rd to Montgomery St) is neither here nor there pending a public inquiry, for which the Reporters have not yet been appointed. Outline plans exist for Phase 6 (Montgomery St to Playhouse), but are subject to forthcoming decisions about extending the trams to Newhaven and remodelling Picardy Pl.

CEC officials are boasting of a 27% reduction in street cleaning and bin-collection queries since their introduction of a waste improvement plan nearly a year ago. Sceptics, like Leith Central Community Council's Harald Tobermann, argue that the number of queries is a clumsy way to measure success, and does not include emergency requests for action from the public. To report a problem, tweet @edinhelp.

Adult-education courses resume at Drummond CHS this month. Choices include: calligraphy, Chinese and Thai cookery, drawing, bookbinding, dressmaking, baritone saxophone, painting, Pilates, jewellery, Zumba, languages, and Hatha yoga ('students are advised to avoid eating less than an hour prior to the class'). Bring a clothes peg. For details visit [goo.gl/r8bp8] or Tel. 556 2651.

# Moreover ...



Advance green lights for cyclists at the junction of McDonald Rd, Leith Walk and Brunswick Rd appeared at the start of Aug. We're **reliably informed** they're the first of their kind in Edinburgh. The capital's first 'electric signal traffic control with coloured lights' appeared at the corner of Broughton St and York Pl in Mar 1928 (Issue 212).

At Edinburgh High Court on 24 Aug, **Kieran Davies**, aged 28 and from Barry in Wales, was sentenced to life imprisonment for the killing of his former friend **Ashley Hawkins**, also from Barry. The attack took place in a flat at **7 Scotland St** on 2 Dec last year. Davies, who denied the charge, will serve at least 19 years before becoming eligible for parole. **Lord Boyd of Duncansby** told him, 'You have been convicted on the clearest evidence of a particularly brutal murder'.

After some initial teething problems, the introduction of communal bins on **London St** seems to be working well. There is a marked reduction in **pavement horrors** and many of the ravaging troublemakers who plagued this area in the past have moved off for **richer pickings** elsewhere.



More excitement on the formerly down-to-earth and sober **Dunedin St**. (1) **Alien Rock** seeks planning permission to extend its recently opened **bouldering centre** at **No. 23** (Issue 265) by linking it to the former storage warehouse at **No. 25** (Ref. 17/03589). (2) **Signature Pubs** seeks to use the 2,421 sq.m industrial unit at **Nos 8-10** (above) as a **brewery** (Ref. 17/03576/FUL). Doing so would involve the erection of a new flue.

New Town & Broughton Community Council has objected to Keasim Ltd's planning application for a 'rooftop village' above Waverley Mall (Ref. 17/03159/FUL). NTBCC is concerned by the 'creeping extension' of development here and its impact on the wider area. It says retaining uninterrupted views over the valley between Old and New Towns is **fundamental** to the Edinburgh World Heritage Site. See our previous assessment at [goo.gl/BWFXQX].

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**Deidre Brock MP**  
 Edinburgh North and Leith



Regular Surgeries

**Leith:** 1st Friday of the month 1-2pm, 166 Great Junction Street  
**Leith Walk:** 2nd Friday of the month 3.30-4.30pm, McDonald Rd Library  
**Stockbridge:** 3rd Friday of the month 1-2pm Stockbridge Library  
**Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre:** Last Friday, 4-5pm  
**dbrockmp.scot**  
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LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL



A forum for local people who want to engage with and work for their local community.

Participate in local democracy.

Make representations to City of Edinburgh Council, other public bodies and private agencies on everything that matters locally.

Next meeting at 7pm on 18 September  
 Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library  
[leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates](http://leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates)

f/BenMacSNP @BenMacpherson

## Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



## Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

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 EH6 4AE

Every Friday:  
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 Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre  
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