

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER *Free*

RBS BACKS OFF FOR NOW

Royal Bank of Scotland last month unexpectedly withdrew its planning permission in principle application for a major new mixed development on Eyre Terrace/Dundas Street/Fettes Row/Royal Crescent (16/05454/PPP).

The move has left observers (664 of whom wrote to the Council to object, 5 to support) scratching their heads.

Did City of Edinburgh Council officials privately suggest that the proposal was likely to be rejected? Did RBS run out of patience at slow progress? Have potential buyers of the site shown little interest in the mix of housing, offices, retail and hospitality as currently configured? Was the site more difficult or expensive to develop than originally expected?

Ward 5's Cllr Hal Osler (Inverleith) sought clarification and was told, rather gnomically:

'The PPP nature of the application made it difficult to resolve some of the issues that arose during the assessment process. It is understood that RBS now intends to market the site and a new detailed planning application is expected in due course.'

'This will require the submission of a new PAN (Proposal of Application Notice) and provide the opportunity for further community engagement.'

So, perhaps back to the drawing board with a new scaled-down proposal. Or perhaps a renewed bid for high-rise flats towering over King George V Park and neighbouring New Town homes? Watch this space.

More community engagement. Whoopee-doo.



A LOT TO REFLECT ON



This rather wonderful seated bear, clutching a crescent-moon mirror plate, features in Lyon & Turnbull's 5 September auction of fine furniture and works of art in Broughton Place. The carved figure measures over a foot in height (33.5cm), dates from the late 19th or early 20th century, and has been estimated to fetch between £800 and £1,200 + fees.

DRUM LODGES STEAD'S PLACE PLANS

The Drum Property Group has now formally submitted a planning application for the site at Stead's Place (Ref. 18/04332/FUL; 18/04349/CON).

It proposes demolition of existing buildings and erection of a mixed-use development including 53 affordable flats, 523 student bedrooms, a 56-room hotel, restaurant(s), 'space for potential community and live music venue', retail, public house or commercial uses, plus associated infrastructure, landscaping and parking [bit.ly/2nO2Udp].

In a letter to Leith Central Community Council on 6 August, Drum said its proposals had been 'comprehensively revised following extensive consultation with the local community'. Its revised plans 'reflect the distinctive, independent feel and needs of the local area', would add to a 'confident and diverse Leith' without sacrificing the individuality and vibrancy' that make it 'unique'. LCCC opposes the plan, and will likely object on grounds including design and a disproportionate student influx.



A Save Leith Walk petition, which attracted 12.2k signatures, was taken to the Planning Committee on 22 August. It says Drum's plans ignore the street's historical significance and are not in keeping with Leith's culture and heritage. For legal reasons, the Committee refused to accept the petition (see bit.ly/2BHSTZ3).

The deadline for comments on Stead's Place is 7 September, although LCCC and others seek extensions. As we went to press, 301 comments had been made: 5 in support, 294 objecting.

Meanwhile, Sikh Sanjog and its associated Punjabi Junction café have undertaken to return to Stead's Place if Drum's proposal goes ahead. The charity – which offers support, training and job opportunities to minority ethnic women – relocated to Graham Street last month, but has reached 'option agreements' to return in 2021. Drum says it is encouraging current tenants to come back by offering them terms in line with current rents below market value. No such joy for The Bed Shop. Established here in 1978, it moved to the Bonnington Trade Estate on 31 August.

PRESSURE MOUNTS ON SHORT-TERM LETS

In a bid to control problematic short-term lets (STLs), City of Edinburgh Council will apply existing powers more rigorously, and seek new powers from the Scottish Government.

CEC can already require owners to apply for planning permission when changing the use of a property. It can apply laws on antisocial behaviour, trading standards, and environmental health; and demand adequate collection of non-domestic waste.

CEC now seeks Holyrood's permission to run a self-financing licensing system. This could ensure landlords and STL operators are fit and proper, and cap the number of STLs or days each STL is used. It could also tighten rules on safety standards. For more, see [bit.ly/2Bn6jK8].



Briefly



If you think Edinburgh's been **busier than usual** this summer, one reason may be the **rising tide of cruise ships** visiting the capital. We estimate 87 such arrivals between 10 Apr and 7 Oct; with industry figures claiming **150k passengers** over the whole of 2018. Passengers shuttle in from Leith, Newhaven, S. Queensferry and Rosyth but **do not spend long** (or much) ashore; typically, 7–10 hours. Pictured here is the **17-deck**, Nassau-registered *Celebrity Eclipse*, carrying 2.85k passengers and 1.27k crew across **Dublin St** on 9 Aug.

The **Broughton History Society's** 2018–19 session starts in **Drummond CHS** on 10 Sept. Aileen Orr will talk on the subject of **'Wojack: the Bear who Went to War'**. Usual 7.30pm start. Refreshments bruin from 7pm.

After a spate of bicycle thefts across central Edinburgh, a policeman at Aug's NTBCC meeting pointed out that whilst **high-quality D-locks** may be pricey, 'you only have to buy them once'. He did not emphasise the **astonishing cost of cutting gear** if you happen to have lost all your own keys or don't have access to somebody else's.



Music in Hospitals & Care is celebrating its 70th year with a drive to fundraise £70k. A donation to the **Forth St-based UK** charity will help it deliver **professionally performed live music**, particularly for those celebrating birthdays in healthcare settings. For more information see [bit.ly/2vhDWY6].

JCDecaux proposes a new bus shelter with double-faced advertising panel for **95 Dundas St**. This robust structure – comprising **'hot dipped galvanised steel'**, **'8mm toughened glass'**, and **invisible screws and fixing gears** is practically vandal-proof. Given that it consists of **'unalterable materials'**, it's amazing that anyone managed to fashion it in the first place.

The **Bellevue Chapel Ladies' Coffee Morning** will resume at **Rodney Street**, 10.15–11.30am on 2 Oct. Tea, coffee, home baking, and a speaker.

Inquiry sessions begin this month into the appeal against **CEC's refusal** of planning permission for a luxury hotel at the old **Royal High School** (Ref. PPA-230-2213). You can follow online at [bit.ly/2Fr1ImQ] and catch up on 1,110 items of background context here [bit.ly/2Lk9EJC]. **Be warned:** contents may contain precognitions.

Locals balk at Festival lock-outs

The boarding-up of Princes Street Gardens last month, to block non-ticket-holders' views of the concert venue within, reignited the now year-round row about tourist and Festival impacts on city life.

Although views here have been obscured before, a tipping-point of irritation seems to have been reached. Hundreds on social media bemoaned the lost view of park and Castle. Others objected to being ejected from, or refused entry to, the public Gardens for hours around each performance. This is, they stressed, Common Good Land owned by the community. Cockburn Association director Cliff Hague's objections appear in full here: [bit.ly/2BiVfxl]. Objections surfaced also about noise pollution and travel disruption.

Council approval and U-turn

Council Leader Adam McVey intervened to have the black panels removed. But, to stop people climbing over or peering through for free, and to stop crowds forming and spilling onto the road, sections of pavement were then closed off during concerts. A bus stop was periodically suspended. To some, this still smacked of public exclusion for private gain.

It emerged that permission for the boarding-up and access arrangements had been arranged earlier by officials using delegated powers, exercising Section 11(1) of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Officials also approved myriad temporary structures across the city centre which, because they do not stand for more than 28 days, require no planning permission.

Bandstand anxieties

Such issues of seemingly unaccountable permissions and privatised access then rekindled anxieties about potentially handing over management of a new Ross Bandstand to an arms-length external organisation (ALEO). The flawed consultation about that continues until 14 September [bit.ly/2P93z5F].

Spurtle shares concerns about the number and disruptiveness of such performances, but suspects these might be allayed by a really firm, comprehensive and transparent operating contract, including limits on future use of the blaes area beside St Cuthbert's. Arguably, an ALEO with clearly defined aims, checks safeguarding the area's Common Good Land status, and an option to suspend or cancel ALEO management if terms were breached, could be a better guarantor of the area's future tranquillity than the Council, whose record on East Princes Street Gardens is mired in controversy.



Year of the cabbage whites

In the allotments around Scotland Street Lane, apart from the glorious, prolonged sun and heat of July, this will be remembered as the year of the cabbage whites.

Day after day, and on to September, these butterflies – *Pieris rapae* – performed their joyous arabesques among this year's potager gardens of great plenty. Like the equally welcome bumble bees, they are particularly attracted to blue flowers such as those on the borage herb. The majority of the cabbage whites we repeatedly see are likely to be males, which patrol around host plants to attract females.

It seems this is a bonanza year for these charming visitors, and though each butterfly lives only for up to about 3 weeks, their exquisite dance will live long in our memories.—JRM



Sip slidin' away?

What, purple-faced heritage buffs asked last month, is the point of disfiguring Edinburgh's principal assets with crass novelties like this bar-cum-helter-skelter on George Street?

Some temporary structures usefully aid ticket sales, but many more serve no such purpose. It's increasingly hard to tell whether the Festival and Fringe are about culture or catering.

At a broader level, Edinburgh Council is deeply conflicted. It leads a Jekyll and Hyde existence, some departments bent on maximising tourism's economic benefits, others struggling to maintain tolerable standards of amenity for those who live here.

The time is approaching when councillors must apply a coherent strategy. Years of concessions and botched compromises are eroding what's best, unique and most attractive about this city. Voters across Edinburgh will not stand much more of it.



Fundraising face-to-face

This from the Caledonian Mercury, 16 March 1826. Cockburn Association and other heritage bodies with legal bills to pay, take note!

The Lord Provost and the Committee for the obtaining subscriptions for the New High School, have issued circular letters pretty extensively for this purpose; but as the amount of the sums subscribed is still far below what is requisite for the completion of the undertaking, and as many of the inhabitants,



and of these some of the wealthiest, have not yet come forward, the Committee intend that personal application shall now be made at the houses of those who have not yet subscribed, steps being immediately to be taken for commencing the building according to the elegant and highly approved plan of Mr Hamilton.

Two gentlemen of the Committee, as authorised by them, will therefore wait on such of the inhabitants as have not yet contributed, with subscription books, in the course of a few days.

The important interests of education, in respect of preserving the peculiar and characteristic advantages of this institution, in the moderation of its charges, as well as the credit and honour of the citizens in the building itself, are as deeply implicated in the success of an application for providing funds for its erection, free of expense to the pupils, that it is confidently hoped the public spirit and opulence of this metropolis will, on this occasion, fully justify the expectations entertained of them.—Council Chamber, 15th March 1826.

Tennis club has a heart

A social event with bake-off at Drummond Tennis Club last month raised £430 towards the cost of a publicly accessible heart defibrillator there.

Behind the initiative was Miro Dragic (centre), who last summer suffered a cardiac arrest at the club during a game with his son and friends. They saved his life by performing CPR for 20 minutes.

'I am forever grateful to my rescuers [also pictured] and hospital staff who looked after me so well.'

Miro has made a full recovery, and now fundraises to help the British Heart Foundation create new treatments and cures. To find out more and/or contribute, visit the JustGiving page at [bit.ly/2MhPkxU].



City consults on moving with the times

The Council is about to start 2 months' public consultations on its Edinburgh City Centre Transformation (ECCT), City Mobility Plan, and Low Emission Zone(s).

Together, these offer coordinated and imaginative ways to achieve 'a more active and connected city, a healthier environment, a transformed city centre, and improved neighbourhood streets'.

The ideas contained in the ECCT [bit.ly/2OMMzRU] are presented simply for discussion at this stage, although they have appeared after considerable behind-the-scenes cross-party, strategic consensus. They prioritise better travel by foot, bike and public transport over private car use.

Eye-catching proposals include:

- reduced traffic, restrictions on cross-city journeys by car
- 'freight hubs' to help businesses and reduce large vehicles' impact
- increased origins and destinations of public transport
- integrated ticketing/payment on buses, trams, bike hire, car club
- low-emission zones, car-free days for key areas, and restrictions on polluting vehicles
- renovated and new civic spaces
- incentives for clean cars and active forms of travel.

Not all the initiatives may be desirable, achievable, or affordable, and some may take years to implement. Nevertheless, they offer far-sighted and necessary initiatives, not just to defend the compact heart of a growing metropolis from congestion and pollution, but also to make it a far pleasanter place to be.

We applaud the combined prospectus's vision. It will be met with howls of anguish in some quarters, and healthy argument will follow. But this is a huge opportunity for Edinburgh to reset the transport agenda.

When they come to discuss implementing new measures in 2019, our politicians must have the courage of their convictions, must do the right thing, must look to the long term, however hard that may be at the start.



Briefly



St Mark's Bridge (on Warriston Rd beside the former B&Q site) closed on 21 Aug for **major works** (our website, 15.8.18). The project will last 24 weeks, meaning that access to **Warriston Crematorium** will be from Ferry Rd only until well into February 2019.

Lothian Buses' Service 11 was suspended along **Pilrig St** on 9 Aug because parked vehicles were blocking access to stops and making it difficult for vehicles to pass. The service instead diverted along **McDonald and Broughton Rds**. This is a problem that has been getting worse for months, caused largely by **commuters seeking free spots**, but exacerbated by an influx of Festival visitors, some in camper vans. City of Edinburgh Council responded on 16 Aug with new yellow boxes around bus stops and the No. 11 service **returned to Pilrig St** 4 days later. **Leith Central Community Council** is already pressing for an extension of parking controls from Pilrig St northwards (Issues 269, 274), and similar measures elsewhere form part of the **City Centre Transformation Project's** blue-sky thinking (below left).

Planning permission has been given for three new 3-bedroom terrace houses on the site of Charles Laing & Sons Foundry at **28 Beaverbank Pl** (Ref. 16/06140/FUL). A condition of consent is that an archaeological study be made of the **late Victorian building** which, whilst of local interest, is not listed by **Historic Environment Scotland**.



CEC seeks the public's views on early ideas for beautifying **Arboretum Pl** and making the crossing between the Botanic and **Inverleith Park** safer. Cyclists, pedestrians, and disabled drivers will have priority over motorists. We'll supply a **Consultation Hub** link here [bit.ly/2wqXvgn] when it becomes available.

Moreover ...

After 2 months of 'carriageway and footway resurfacing, traffic signals and street lights upgrade', work at **Broughton Rd and Rodney St** was scheduled to end on 2 Sept. We will not miss the **queuing vehicles**, delays, closures, and informal diversions through neighbouring streets.

The new 2-way cycleway on **Leith St** will remain closed for the foreseeable future due to north- and south-bound '**access arrangements**'. CEC officers are liaising with contractors Laing O'Rourke to explore whether **Picardy Place** traffic management measures may allow south-bound access during construction. This **rather unclear news** came in a reply by Transport Convener Lesley Macinnes to a question by Cllr Chas Booth.

Worshippers at the newly extended **Bellevue Chapel** have finally been granted a temporary occupation certificate and were able to resume Sunday services in the main hall on 19 Aug. They now have access to new rooms around this space, and hope to be using the **Cornwallis Pl** side extension in Oct.

As expected, a Reporter last month mostly dismissed **McEwan Fraser's appeal** against CEC's refusal of permission for outside advertising at **130 E. Claremont St**. Good.

In these days of **soaring temperatures**, a drouthie reader tells us that **Refill** is a free phone app which maps businesses in any chosen locale where environmentally responsible folk can **replenish a water bottle** at no charge. Broughton currently boasts 9 such **registered oases**: Artisan Roast, Joseph Pearce, Treacle, Premier Inn, Costa (x3), and Starbucks (x2). Careful souls wishing to avoid the **unnecessary expense** of bottles may prefer a low-tech method (generally reliable here from **August to April**) of looking up and opening wide.

At three local events last month, feedback was given by City of Edinburgh Council and Collective Architecture on previous public consultations in June about development of the former **Powderhall Waste Management** site. Local perceptions of the neighbourhood today are **generally positive**. There are scores of around 5 out of a possible 7 for 'feeling safe', 'identity & belonging' and 'moving around'. Among those rated at 4/7 were 'work & economy', 'streets & spaces', and 'play & recreation'. Lowest scores went to 'influence & sense of control' (3.5/7) and 'traffic & parking' (3/7).

'A poor life this if, full of care, We have no time to **stand and stare**.' Find out what **Spartle** regular JRM discovered when he took time to stand and stare at a fascinating ghostly trace that clings to **Broughton St**. His article appears on our website on 1.9.18.

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Appointments not necessary,
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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 meetings: 7pm, 17 Sept and 15 Oct
Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates



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Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

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Every Friday:
4-5pm at
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NEW TOWN & BROUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

represents the views
of local residents to
City of Edinburgh Council.

You're very welcome to attend.

Come along and make a
difference at our next meetings

7.30pm, 10 Sept, 8 Oct
Broughton St Mary's Parish
Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbcc.org.uk