

Spurttle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

NEWHAVEN OR NOT: DECISION LOOMS ON TRAMS

As Issue 281 went to press, on 28 February the Transport & Environment Cmte was scheduled to consider the Final Business Case for extending Edinburgh's tramline to Newhaven.

Barring further delays, a decision to proceed could be made at the full Council meeting on 14 March, with procurement contracts signed towards the end of the month. During April–August, Community Councils Together on Trams [bit.ly/2GyXYnk] would then seek to engage contractors with a local perspective on managing the works.

Officials now estimate that the 2.8-mile extension will cost £207M, 25% more than initially suggested. That total includes an £11.5M contingency fund to cover the usual unforeseen problems, and has been drafted with utmost caution to factor in a 6% 'optimism bias' identified by Behavioural Scientists as typical in large-scale projects. Overall costs would be met from future fares and a Lothian Buses special dividend of £20M [bit.ly/2DYyCwc].

In theory, the line could be finished in 2022 and operational by the end of March 2023. Supporters say it would boost economic development, including new housing, in the north of the city, and improve the attractiveness, capacity and green credentials of Edinburgh's public transport.

Sceptics are appalled at work proceeding before publication of the Hardie Inquiry findings, and fear engineers are pushing ahead without first resolving already identified challenges. They anticipate spiralling costs, and are concerned that remediation measures will not match the scale of disruption to traders during construction. For an historical perspective: [bit.ly/2BM77pA].



PONDERING SPRING



It may have been only late February, but spring was definitely in the air when we photographed these characters in the East Scotland Street Lane allotments. They, and dozens of others, appeared to be enjoying a lively game of multiple leap-frog, and were not in a mood to be quiet about it.

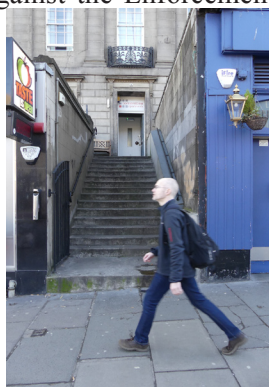
HALF-BAKED BAXTER'S PLACE APPEAL DISMISSED

A Scottish Government Reporter has determined against the Enforcement Notice appeal (and a speculative appeal for expenses) by Cornerstone Property. Cornerstone was fighting Edinburgh Council's refusal of permission to convert 7–8 Baxter's Place to short-term, whole-flat lets [bit.ly/2xmqK5p].

Although he acknowledged that Council paperwork contained 'inaccuracies and misdescriptions of the property', on 19 February, Mr Rob Hunter dismissed the appeal regarding the Enforcement Notice, and also refused a later application to delay the timing of the Enforcement Notice (in the event that the appeal were dismissed).

Cornerstone is therefore required to cease its current 48+ bed operation by 19 April, unless it opts to pursue a (potentially costly) judicial appeal to the Court of Session within six weeks. Details here: [bit.ly/2TZWJBN].

'All in all,' one well-placed observer told *Spurttle*, 'it gives a little confidence that the system does work for some objectors for some of the time ... but it takes a lot of effort.'



CAMPAIGNERS HAIL STEAD'S PLACE DECISION

To the dismay of some and the delight of others, councillors have refused consent for Drum Property Group's demolition and redevelopment of 106–162 Leith Walk.

Reasons for the unanimous decision (against officials' advice) are detailed here [bit.ly/2ToGfCM], but pivotal was evidence from Cockburn Association's Terry Levinthal. He laid out the sandstone shops' importance to the appearance and character of the Leith Conservation Area, and made clear the Council's statutory duty to conserve and preserve the building. No exceptional case was made against this, and Drum's own representatives agreed the shops were structurally sound.

Leith Central Community Council's Planning Convener Harald Tobermann has since welcomed the decision, and the Development Management Sub-Committee's robust justification of it. It appears capable of surviving legal challenge. He has written to Edinburgh University (which wanted postgraduate accommodation and a hotel) for its current position in light of recent events.

Much credit for this result goes to Save Leith Walk's galvanising campaign, not least its community-generated alternative aspirations for the rear of the site. Hopefully, this model will prompt future developers to meaningfully engage locals first rather than arrive in a neighbourhood with pre-formed ambitions.

As a guide to scale, LCCC now asks the Planning Convener/Committee to adopt the Campaign's brief in formal guidance, both for 106–162 and another site at 139 Leith Walk.

APRIL BY-ELECTION

Leith Walk ward's Cllr Marion Donaldson (Labour) resigned on 29 January, triggering a by-election on 11 April.

Donaldson, vice-convener of the Finance and Resources Cmte, was first returned for Ward 12 in September 2015, then re-elected in May 2017 with 15% of the first-preference votes. She stepped down partly for health reasons, but febrile debate within the Labour group over Council budget negotiations is also understood to have influenced her decision. She was an attentive, softly spoken, and hard-working member whom we wish well in the future.

Known candidates so far: Jack Caldwell (Lib-Dem); Nick Gardner (Lab); Dan McCroskie (Con); Rob Munn (SNP).

Briefly

Details of what to expect from the new **Edinburgh St James** keep trickling out. Expect: a 214-room hotel with 2,450 sqft of event space from **W Hotels**; a 73-room apartment-hotel (single beds only?) from **Roomzzz**; 150 residential units; and a 5-screen **Everyman Cinema**.

At **Broughton History Society's** meeting in Drummond CHS at 7pm on 4 Mar, **Robin Jones** will give an *Introduction to Scottish Pottery*. On 1 Apr, **David Smale** will talk about *The Radical War of 1820 and the Use of Police Spies*.

The Scottish Government Reporter aims to determine on layout of **Leith St, Greenside Row and Waterloo Pl** by 26 Apr (ROD-230-1). Objectors stress: the need for separate cycleways up Leith St and better access at junctions; an end to current dangerous and wrongheaded removal of bus lanes; additional space for cyclists and pedestrians.

City of Edinburgh Council is reviewing how **community councils** work. Possible changes include: (1) adding **Scottish Youth Parliament representatives** as ex officio members; (2) allowing office bearers to be appointed with specific responsibility for **youth and community engagement**.

Sir John Leighton, **National Galleries of Scotland's** Director-General, recently met **New Town & Broughton Community Council** and others. He confirmed 22 saplings will replace 52 trees felled in **E Princes St Gardens** last year, but could not detail where or when **compensatory planting** may occur. NGS's difficulties with the congested CEC-owned precinct on **the Mound** during Festivals were discussed, but no obvious **conclusions or resolutions** resulted. Dealings with the NGS may be likened to **communications from whales**. They generally unfold slowly, over vast distances, and it is not always clear afterwards **what (if anything)** has been said.

Lady Boys of Bangkok will not after all squeeze into **Pilrig Park** this summer (see Issue 281). After determined local resistance, they will, instead, temporarily return to a **Fountainbridge gap-site** until more permanent arrangements be found. Thanks to CEC Director of Place **Paul Lawrence** for this spectacular volte-face.

Tourist Services (Edinburgh) Ltd's plans for the Laing's Foundry site at **28 Beaverbank Pl** comprise 8 flatted dwellings on 5 storeys and associated garden grounds (19/00317/FUL). We expect **short-term lets**. TS(E) sniffs at a neighbour: 'The adjacent cottage at **27 Beaverbank Pl** ... remains an architectural enigma. [TSE's] planning application with a car free front garden does much to improve the amenity surrounding this **unfortunate property**.' *Spurtle* enjoys such scruffy unfortunates.

Many who'd known him since **boyhood** were saddened to learn **E Claremont St** resident **Kevin Paterson** died last month. He passed at home on 10 February, aged 22. Too soon. Lamented.

New bus bigger and better, maybe

Forty-two enormous new Lothian buses are coming to Edinburgh, starting on Routes 11 (Ocean Terminal-Hyvots Bank) and 16 (Silverknowes-Colinton) this month.

The 100-seater Enviro1004XLB can carry 129 passengers, and boasts 'comfortable high-backed seating, Wi-Fi, USB charging, mood lighting, and audio-visual stop announcements'. They sound great, but we recommend not letting one run over your foot.

The 3-axle buses on a Volvo B8L chassis will be super-efficient, not least thanks to an electric power train and battery, and the fact that they have passenger doors in the middle as well as at the front. However, they still run on diesel.

We welcome their arrival, and will be interested to observe what effect the new gentle giants have on Edinburgh's crumbling kerbs and carriageways



Thinking ahead on Picardy Place

Delivering a revised Picardy Place is expected to cost up to £1.5M more than originally expected when the Growth Accelerator Model (GAM) was signed in 2016 by City of Edinburgh Council (CEC), the Developer of the St James Quarter, and the Scottish Government (SG).

CEC is now investigating how to find the money. According to a Report to the Full Council on 1 February (bit.ly/2Tb34wO; see also Briefly, p.2), three options are in view

First, if CEC can plausibly argue that enhancements will increase rateable values beyond the current GAM target, it could ask the SG for extra funds. However, the SG is under no obligation to provide them, and won't even consider doing so until all other targets are met.

Second, CEC could use money from its 2021/22 block capital budget for Carriageways and Footways, hoping the sum could be reduced or paid back if Option 1 works.

Third, CEC could borrow. Repaying £1.5M over 20 years at an interest rate of 5.1% would cost an additional £0.98M.

CEC originally expected to sell off a central island in Picardy Place to a hotel operator, and put the money raised towards its Capital Investment Programme. That money no longer exists. Furthermore, despite the missing hotel, CEC still claims the overall St James Quarter development will create for Scotland an extra 1k full-time-equivalent jobs and £45M per year.

Taking all this into account, and the fraught nature of CEC's current finances, it seems clear there will be immense pressure to make money from the Picardy Place promontory. Now, before the helter-skelter bar and pop-up Easter Market arrive, would be a good time for locals to think of suitable uses.



Parking review on the move

City of Edinburgh Council is commissioning a Strategic Review of parking across Edinburgh and surrounding towns and villages. Results will help officers assess if/where/what parking controls should be considered.

Consultants will also identify potential future generators of parking, such as major developments and extension of the tramline.

The Strategic Review began with a report to the Transport & Environment Cmte in late February, too late for us to report here. We expect the citywide study will end by April 2020.

This is a welcome, holistic approach which may eventually afford some relief to currently uncontrolled zones such as Redbraes and Pilrig without simply shunting problems along to other neighbourhoods nearby.

Broughton St returns to normality



Local independent traders will celebrate the reopening of Broughton Street (a fortnight early) with a weekend of special events on 30–31 March.

To coincide with Mothering Sunday, expect free samples, discounts, and a general spring in the step.

This, of course, is only the end of Phase 1 in a major project to replace gas mains. Phases 2 (London Street) and 3 (Forth Street) will follow, and are expected to last another 14 weeks.

Small businesses are at the heart of this community, so shop local and do us all a favour.

Edinburgh on high: an architectural spectre

On Broughton Street's NE junction with Albany Street, now Simpson & Marwick Property, there stood originally St Mary's Free Church. It was designed by J.T. Rothead (architect of the Wallace Memorial near Stirling) and established in 1862. Rothead's design was preferred to one by Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, available as a sketch here [bit.ly/2nSBkKR].

Rothead's building ceased to be a church in the late 1960s, and it was occupied by Mutries, a theatrical costumier's emporium which this writer remembers as an Aladdin's Cave of charms. (Readers – please send your own recollections of it). The building survived until 1983, when it was demolished in favour of the current office. A last vestige – the neo-Gothic manse – remains at No. 56 Albany Street.

Who knows what would have been the fate of 'Greek' Thomson's vision had it been realised? So, as you pass by, spare a thought for that majestic tower and mighty pillars, the spectre of an architectural masterpiece that never was in the heart of Broughton.— *JRM*. See also [bit.ly/2V8rXqC], [bit.ly/2Vg2AmK].



Briefly

The Yard on Eyre Place Lane has consent for a 2-storey extension at its western end (18/0071/FUL). Extra capacity will form **flexible meeting space and offices** for training and fund raising. 10 years ago, the Yard supported **50 families** in Edinburgh. Last year it supported **800 families**. The extension will require removal and replacement of two young birches.

Community police plan surgeries at **McDonald Rd Library** on Weds, noon–1pm.

CEC has green-lighted illumination of **St Andrew's House (2–6 Regent Rd)** at night (18/02456/FUL). The aim is 'to enhance St Andrew's House's place as a **valued feature of the Edinburgh skyline** and accentuate the distinctive and renowned architecture of a recognisable part of the **World Heritage Site** at all times of the day. ... The lighting scheme will be tasteful and customisable so various colours can be displayed to acknowledge events, public holidays, and special occasions.' Key here is the term '**tasteful**', which is conveniently indefinable.

TV naturalist **Chris Packham** spent a day with Language Class pupils from **Broughton Primary School** last month. He was filming for BBC's **Winterwatch**, on bowling greens which parents wish preserved as **useable open space** within the Powderhall development. The next public consultation on this matter will be held in the school gym on 14 Mar, 5–7pm.

The **Engine Yard Ltd** seeks planning permission to build residential blocks within 2, semi-derelict, 125-year-old, B-listed **Shrubhill Tramway Workshops at 26 Dryden Street**, and a new dwelling block between them (18/10265/FUL). They plan 8 one-bedroom flats; 24 two-bedroom; 1 three-bedroom; and 3 four-bedroom. This scheme replaces ones consented in **2015 and 2018**, after discovery of basement voids (former inspection pits) which can be usefully incorporated. See [bit.ly/211D82t] for design-and-access statement.

Leith Central CC is pressing Miller Homes to reopen the Water of Leith walkway through **Bonnington** at weekends. It also wants a new bridge to be built, as specified in an early design brief for the area.

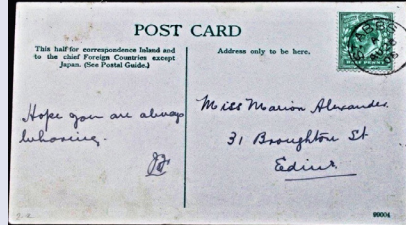
TH Real Estate – investor behind the new Edinburgh St James – now calls itself **Nuven Real Estate**. The choice of *Nuven* – apparently meaning 'new love' in Kurdish but sounding like a **brand of margarine** in English – aims to 'bring greater clarity and consistency to our brand across the globe'. **Spread the word.**

A reader **strongly objected** to our Issue 281 headline (p.2): 'Drummond's future looks secure'. She interpreted a **derogatory implication** that Gaels are invasive [bit.ly/2DVI43x]. *Spurtle* intended **nothing of the sort** (we meant *settled* rather than *secure*), but understands her concern. The **Editor apologises** for clumsy wording and any offence caused.

Postcard from the past

Many thanks to Cllr Claire Miller (Ward 11), who rightly suspected that this item – which she noticed through her involvement with the Coldingham & Shore Past group – would be of interest to *Spurtle* readers.

The postcard image is of Jock's Nose at St Abb's, and the slightly mysterious message on the reverse reads, 'Hope you are always labouring.'



'Hope you are always labouring.' The signature is unintelligible, but the addressee was one Miss Marion Alexander at 31 Broughton Street. The card is postmarked 26 August 1906.

We've tried to identify Miss Marion from Post Office Directories, but with no success. We realise it's a long shot, but can any reader help?

It was fun to stay at the YMCA

Précised from the *Scotsman*, 14 March 1919.

AMERICAN HUT IN EDINBURGH.

More and more men of the American Army and Navy are expected to visit Edinburgh before they return home from service duties in Europe. For about a year yet it is thought they will come and go, and that expectation counters the impression that the commodious new hut created for their comfort and convenience by the American Y.M.C.A. in St Andrew Square ... has come upon the scene somewhat late

The establishment ... includes a spacious lounge, with an information bureau, a newspaper and postcard stand, a dining room to seat 125, with a spacious kitchen and the latest appliances, an entertainment hall with accommodation for nearly 500 persons and a complete cinematograph installation, a billiard room with two tables, and a quiet room, as it is called, where men may write their letters and pass a restful hour among the books and magazines. In addition, there are such conveniences as shower baths and individual lockers.

The menus are varied, the meals are excellent both in quality and in cuisine, and the charges are such as to meet the resources of the soldier's purse—a thoroughly satisfying lunch, for instance, costing 1s. 6d., and consisting of three courses, with tea, coffee, or cocoa to follow. There are accommodation and equipment in the Hut for 250 beds

For the full article, see our website (1.3.19). For period photos and later history, see [bit.ly/2T6t2BC].—AM



Seeking the perfect blend

In January 2018, Holyrood debated a motion by Ben Macpherson MSP (Edinburgh Northern & Leith) on maintenance of tenemental communal property.

From that debate emerged a cross-party Scottish Parliamentary Working Group, which has now issued its interim report [bit.ly/2GQFmPN]. There are 3 broad recommendations.

- (1) Compulsory property inspections every 5 years by qualified, independent professionals. Results (not including costings of any required work) publicly accessible.
- (2) Compulsory owners' associations with the status of corporate bodies to improve effectiveness and ability to set up Sinking Funds.
- (3) Mandatory Sinking Funds, whereby neighbours make regular affordable payments into growing accounts. Such funds to be carefully monitored, and used for necessary maintenance and repairs only.

These draft proposals will now be exposed to 'the rigours of scrutiny'. But with 68% of Scotland's pre-1919 housing having disrepair to critical elements, and 36% having critical and urgent repair needs, the time has surely come for action to stabilise and improve the situation.

Moreover ...



When a compressed air cylinder caught fire at the **Edinburgh St James** construction site on 13 Feb, hundreds of workers from all over the world were evacuated. The **resultant multinational throng** was a cause for much high-vis reflection. The fire was subdued within half-an-hour.



There has been mixed reaction to news that a new top storey will be added to **Waverley Mall** (Ref. 18/02748/FUL). Shops, restaurants, cafés and offices will enclose 3 sides of a new plaza. Here, **'pop-up' events** (e.g. performances, markets, under-rain cinema) are envisaged, with any permissions granted by Licensing – the same lot who recently allowed **shanty-town bars** here during the Festivals. An exterior south and west-facing walkway will access views across the valley and Gardens, but the current **Old Town vista** as seen from S St Andrew St will be slightly curtailed. This is anathema to heritage purists, who see not building on **Princes St's southern side** as vital for preserving Edinburgh's outstanding topographic character. Some critics dislike how parts of the development will be **locked at night**, even though anti-social behaviour here is a long-standing problem. Others see a missed opportunity for better (underground) links between station and the **Edinburgh St James**. Few will miss today's largely unused and unusable concrete wasteland.

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leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates



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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. The next meeting is
 at 7.30pm on 11 March in
**Broughton St Mary's Parish
 Church, Bellevue Crescent**

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