

# Spurtle



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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER** Free

## LEITH WALK BY-ELECTION RESULT – MUNN WON

Rob Munn (SNP) is now a Leith Walk ward councillor, having won the by-election on 11 April with the necessary 3,637 votes and 35.7% of the vote. This is the third time he has been returned to office hereabouts as a local councillor.

Green candidate Lorna Slater came second with 25.5% of the first-preference vote. Labour's Nick Gardner was third on 15.5%. Also-rans: McCroskrie (Con, 10.7%), Caldwell (LibDem, 8.6%), Illingworth (Ind, 1.5%), Jacobsen (SLP, 0.8%), Scott (Ind, 0.2%), Stirling (TFBM, 0.2%), and Laird (ScLP, 0.2%).

The SNP now matches the Conservatives with 17 councillors in City Chambers. The Greens and LibDems will be heartened by significant rises in support. Labour will be disappointed to have slipped. The Conservatives were blown backwards, despite (or perhaps because of) positioning a local candidate as the decorative figurehead to HMS *Ruth Davidson*.

The turnout was predictably poor. The percentage poll was 30.3%, with 7,267 valid ballot papers and 67 spoiled ones. By-elections tend not to quicken the blood, but some observers also blamed an excess of politics elsewhere. Others suggested widespread, whole-flat short-term lets in the ward may mean many formerly eligible voters were too busy changing sheets or ironing banknotes to show up on the day.

Optimists will note that, although we live in troubled times, extremist views failed to gain any significant traction. Leith Walk was fortunate to have a choice between mostly intelligent, informed, and well-intentioned candidates with a range of views. Long may it continue.



## THE FAST AND THE STUDIOUS



Drummond CHS sixth-formers have triumphed in a nationwide schools challenge to conceptualise a hyperloop transport system (trains travelling up to 700 mph through a vacuum) for Singapore. Pictured are Alizah Mughal, Ryan Gordon, Wiktor Rauba, Faye Fulton, and DEC (Design Engineer Construct!) teacher Mark Holden. They will now travel (comparatively slowly) to Singapore in October, where sponsor Bentley Systems has invited them to attend its annual *Year in Infrastructure Conference* at the Marina Bay Sands Resort. Congratulations to all concerned!

## LEITH STREET CLOSES AGAIN

Leith Street and Calton Road will close again to motor traffic for 3 weeks between 5 and 25 May.

Pedestrians will be able to pass via a covered walkway. Cyclists will have to dismount for 25–30m. Greenside Row will stay open.

As exclusively revealed by the *Spurtle* online last month [[bit.ly/2IgyPzq](http://bit.ly/2IgyPzq)], the disruption will last while a huge 1.2K-ton crane is built, operated, and dismantled.

It is needed to lift 20, 40-ton, 60m girders into position. The new girders are required owing to 'evolving designs' for the Edinburgh St James, evolutions caused by the distance between new structures and John Lewis 'getting longer'. *Spurtle* reckons someone fell short with a tape measure.

Errors and pragmatic readjustments are probably inevitable on a construction project of this size, but that will come as no comfort to those affected elsewhere.

Bus users, active-travelling commuters, and residents on streets filled with displaced traffic will all feel the negative effects. Broughton Street traders potentially face yet another slump in footfall.

At the time of writing, Lothian Buses had not yet published diversion details via social media and its website. However, we understand that another temporary gyratory at Abbeyhill is not envisaged owing to the amount of time it would take to set up.

Leith Street last closed for 44 weeks in September 2017.



## WAVERLEY'S FUTURE SPARKS DEBATE



New Town & Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) members are keeping a close eye on plans to redevelop Waverley Station, even though it lies outside their area of interest.

Members agree that the Waverley Masterplan (Issue 283) is close enough and sufficiently important to merit their full attention, and were hoping to arrange a public meeting on the matter before the end of April.

Some are alarmed by the scale of the proposals, which wouldn't 'simply' revamp the station as happened at Haymarket in 2013, but could significantly extend it along Market Street and up onto North Bridge. Some share the Cockburn Association's misgivings about the potential loss of so much listed Victorian architecture. Still others feel it risks confusing a transport hub with a shopping centre.

Last month, *Spurtle* posted photos online of the station, prompting a voluminous and uncontrollable response from readers via social media. We added as many of the comments as we could keep up with at the foot of the article [[bit.ly/2VCKoEI](http://bit.ly/2VCKoEI)], stopping only when the conversation veered like a runaway trolleybus into a line of trams.

## Briefly



Continuing the **puddocky** theme of Issues 282 and 283, Gerard Boyd sent us this photo of a curiously ‘mummified’ frog that appeared in **Claremont Bank** recently. His cats are (suspiciously, in our view) showing no interest in it.

Planning permission is sought to convert the former sauna and massage parlour at **18 Albert Pl** into seven holiday hotel suites with Reception (Ref. 19/01561/FUL). The proposal’s design statement says the change would remove a ‘**bad neighbour**’ usage, provide visitor accommodation without adding to local Airbnb issues, and introduce **windows and daylight** into the structure for the first time. For this relief much thanks.



Production at the **Lady Haig Poppy Factory** shifted to Redford Barracks last month as work began on a major upgrade of the **Logie Green Rd** premises. Work will include installation of a new fire suppression system, and removal of asbestos. Machinery and 34 disabled veterans will return to **Canonmills** in 2021.

The **Lal family**, long associated with the Keen-Kost newsagent’s at **45 Dundas St**, will reopen the premises as a café in Jun. Copies of the *Spurtle* will continue to be stocked.



The **2nd biggest issue** of the Leith Walk by-election was, according to @fatblackcatspaw on Twitter, the whereabouts of the **Elm Row** pigeons. *Spurtle* can report that they’re in safe storage at the Museums Collection Centre on **Barony St**. We expect them back, along with the clock, post tramworks.

Former NTBCC Chair **Ian Mowat** has, after a recent change of address, been coopted as a member of **Leith Central Community Council**.

## Reimagining Edinburgh

A new Edinburgh-wide group called Citizen launched last month to some fanfare. It comprises a network of campaigns (e.g. Living Rent, Save Leith Walk, Transition Edinburgh, Planning Democracy) and locals without attachment to one political party. It is united around a common perception that, despite efforts by some individual elected representatives, short-term-focused politicians as a whole have not responded sufficiently to public demands that Edinburgh be run for residents before visitors and big business [bit.ly/2IHLuMm].

Citizen says it will work to formulate a *Manifesto for the City* over the next year, and is considering whether to run candidates in the 2022 Council election. For now, it has 10 broad aims, which we summarise as:

1. Promote community-led development.
2. Prioritise quality of environment: identify and protect land and public space held in common good.
3. Protect key assets like playing fields, football pitches, and shared spaces; protect public assets and services.
4. Promote fair rents and increased public housing over holiday lets and second homes.
5. Defend the city against over-tourism and commodification.
6. Promote community-based learning and organising for citizens.
7. Learn from international examples and experience of creating participatory municipal politics.
8. Challenge the current economic growth strategy and business-led regeneration.
9. Examine the impact of the festivalisation of the city and explore alternatives.
10. Promote an environmentally sustainable transport infrastructure.

Citizen is a potentially influential voice for those concerned about Edinburgh’s character, direction of travel, and effective governance. Significantly, it favours action over agonising – *Spurtle* will follow its progress with interest.

## People power moves mast

In Issue 283 we reported a poorly sited phone mast on Broughton Rd which was towering over the Gretna memorial in Rosebank Cemetery.

We’re pleased to report that, following irresistible pressure from locals and their elected representatives, British Telecom has moved the mast about 6m eastwards, where it now towers over a different part of the tripartite memorial.

This is a partial victory. But unless there is a change in legislation requiring telecom rivals to share infrastructure, we should expect further looming intrusions since superfast 5th-generation mobile communications require even more masts, closer together than we have today.



## His first avowed intent ...

Responding to ‘Edinburgh on High’ in Issue 282, reader Jim Sibbet-Opic of Northumberland Street has contacted the *Spurtle* with his experience of Mutrie’s, the theatrical costumiers, some 44 years ago.

On 27 November 1975, Jim hired a Quaker or Pilgrim’s outfit with distinctive hat, tunic, and buckled shoes. He wore them in celebration of Thanksgiving Day as an entertainment he devised for McDermotts of Ardersier, by Inverness. McDermotts was an oil-rig construction company with its HQ in New Orleans, and the Highlands staff were almost entirely American.

Jim writes: ‘To entertain them on Thanksgiving Day, for several years, I, with my secretary, acted out a re-enactment of the Pilgrim landing in Plymouth, Massachusetts.’

On our website [bit.ly/2VqvRib], we reproduce Jim’s rare copy of a William Mutrie & Son Ltd’s ‘Condition of Hire’ slip, replete with blood-curdling penalties ‘in respect of all loss, shortage, damage, forfeiture or attachment howsoever occasioned, whether arising from negligence or not’.—*JRM*



## No safe place for key boxes

Landlords operating unauthorised short-term lets were dealt a blow last month when a Scottish Reporter upheld a Council Enforcement action.

One landlord in the Old Town had appealed against CEC’s requirement that he remove 11 exterior keyboxes attached to a listed building [bit.ly/2Xa5Hxs].

The Reporter dismissed the owner’s contention that his property had been unfairly singled out, saying he could only consider the case in front of him. The keyboxes, he continued, were ‘unsightly and detract from the appearance of the doorway’. Therefore, CEC’s insistence on removal within a month was appropriate.

The decision bolsters the Council’s position that prior planning consent, and sometimes listed building consent, is required for such additions to a property.

City officials are also now insisting that any change from residential to sole commercial use must receive planning permission first, and there is a presumption not to grant it.

The Cockburn Association has welcomed the decision, and cheerfully points out that properties in breach of these rules may be reported here [bit.ly/2X19Qn2].

## Lady in red

Spotted on the pavement of Scotland Street on 10 April, a ladybird sunning itself: a ruby etched in stone, a harbinger of a Mozartian summer of garden harmonies to come? Off it flew.

Then, on 13 April, secreting itself in a boxwood shrub in the 'Giraffe Garden' off East Scotland Street Lane, another ladybird – or the same one, or an amorous companion? Whatever its circumstances, we rejoiced, and hope it has now taken up residence.

- The *coccinella* in the ladybird's binomial scientific name derives from the Latin *coccineus*, meaning scarlet.

- Also known as 'Our Lady's bird'. The Virgin Mary was often depicted wearing a scarlet cloak in early paintings, and the ladybird's seven spots (*septempunctata*) were said to represent her seven joys and seven sorrows.

- The German name *Marienkäffar* translates as Marybeetle.

- The German equivalent of the English nursery rhyme 'Ladybird, ladybird' is 'Marien wurmchen', featured in 'Knaben Wunderhorn' and set to music by Robert Schumann.

- In the Netherlands, the ladybird street tile is a symbol against senseless violence. It is often placed on the sites of deadly crimes.

Now read on, dear reader, and send us your ladybird observations.—JRM



Photo: Strange Ones [bit.ly/2uX4ahS].

## Briefly



Last month, councillors gave planning consent for the controversial new home of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra behind Dundas House on **St Andrew Square**. The state-of-the-art, 10-gallon-hat-in-a-pint-pot concert hall will be called **The Dunard Centre**, in honour of Carol Grigor's trust fund which made a substantial contribution to the **£45M price tag** and has underwritten capital cost overruns and any annual losses in the first 3 years of operation.

Proposals for the toilets-to-trattoria conversion at **4-5 Brandon Ter** appear to have become more inconvenient (Ref. 19/00430/FUL). Recently revised plans now include a **flood-defence wall** at 13.03m (where today there is only a metal balustrade) to match that on the **other side of the river**. No new windows will be set below this level. Structural design will include **strengthening works and tanking**. Pizza Veneziana, anyone?

Whilst welcoming the speedy upgrading of gas mains in the area, some locals on **Broughton and London Sts** have been left irritated by unsightly new external connections to their homes. The fittings arrived without prior consultation, and some householders question whether they are in keeping with the listed frontages. **Scottish Gas Network** argues that health-and-safety regulations mean the new pipes cannot be discretely tucked away or fed through from adjoining properties. **Cllr Joanna Mowat** is investigating.



**Broughton Scouts** had a vintage day in the spring sunshine with Lothian Buses, *reports Scout Leader Scott Richards*. On 13 Apr, local Beaver Scouts, clutching the handsome new **centenary celebration badge**, jumped on the No. 5 towards **Morningside**, and didn't miss a photo opportunity with the conductors. Lothian Buses and Broughton Scouts are both celebrating **100 years** of serving the East End community.

## Local children victorious for third year running

Huge congratulations to Broughton Primary School, which last month was revealed as winner of the Edinburgh Marathon Festival Junior Schools competition in May 2018.

This was Broughton PS's second consecutive defence of the title, for which they will be awarded a trophy and £150 in vouchers for sports equipment.

Over 1,500 pupils from across Edinburgh and the Lothians took part in the event, with 3-6-year olds trotting 1km, 6-8-year olds cantering 1.5km, and 9-12-year olds galloping 2km. Fund raising around the event has raised over £8K in the past to subsidise school trips, making the excursions truly inclusive.

This year, though, the emphasis is on fun for the 99 Broughton PS pupils taking part, as well two parent marathon-relay teams and teachers and parents running in the 5km and 10km races. Between 15 and 30 families participate in the Sunday training sessions, depending on weather.

'Pupils and staff from Broughton PS are a brilliant example of why we do the Junior Races,' said EMF Director Neil Kilgour. 'Their dedication and commitment ... reflect how the school is determined to make the children more active.'

For information on how to enter this year's Edinburgh Marathon Festival on 25 May, visit: [bit.ly/1KNVIID].



## 'Don't botch the notch'

Neighbours have objected strongly to plans to infill a recessed 'notch' at 34 Dublin Street Lane North (Ref. 19/01336/FUL). The 2-storey extension would provide a new utility room and third bedroom.

The building concerned (not pictured) forms part of a coherent complex by architect Richard Murphy, completed in 2000. This multiple-award-winning layout broadly matches the footprint of structures which existed here before the encroachment of the Georgian New Town.

Murphy's aim was to recreate the spirit of 'an organically planned village', producing a sense of space, variety, movement, and modelling.

Objectors say the proposed change, which would make the structure more obviously rectangular, is clumsy and poorly articulated. They note that it comes from a firm of 'architectural designers' rather than more highly qualified architects. They raise questions about its 'inappropriate' style and about the technical accuracy of the plans.

Murphy himself says he does not object to his creations being adapted, so long as changes are made sympathetically. A Council determination is expected by 13 May.



# Moreover ...



The Powderhall waste-transfer building has finally transformed into **dust and memories**. Not even the substantial-looking tank could resist the demolition claw. Meanwhile, Council planners have revealed a firm aspiration to build a **190-place nursery** on part of the bowling greens adjacent.

Congratulations to **Out of the Blue**, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this month. From small beginnings in 1994, the **arts organisation** now occupies 5 buildings across the city and has variously taught, exhibited, fed or given space to create and perform to over **2M people**.

The Crowne Plaza hotel on **Royal Ter** seeks changes to its licence, to the dismay of neighbours. It proposes: **increased capacity** from 560 to 615 drinkers; **extended bar hours**; allowing customers **outside** at the rear; offering guests **live music, televised sport, and gaming**. Locals describe the hotel as 'not community-friendly', and say management inadequately responds to complaints about noise and littering. **NTBCC will object**.

Everyone's invited to the free **Annual Summer Fair at Broughton PS** on Sat 1 Jun, noon-2.30pm. Stalls include: baking; BBQ; face painting; raffle; popcorn and candyfloss machines; pocket-money toys; **pre-loved uniforms, toys and books**. Bouncy castle, smoothie bike, and sports/dance demos. To donate a raffle prize or hire a stall, contact [broughtonparents@gmail.com](mailto:broughtonparents@gmail.com).

Waste Management's glacial response to clearing a blocked rubbish chute in **Claremont Court** has been disgraceful. We pity residents assaulted by stench over the **Easter heatwave**. But credit where it's due – the roomier litter bin at the corner of **Melgund Ter and E Claremont St** is a step forward. So long as it is emptied frequently enough, stray rubbish in the area should reduce significantly.

The **Bellevue Pl** owl disappeared briefly on the weekend of 6-7 Apr, **raising concerns** among some and hopes among others that it had been stolen. In fact, it had been **knocked over by vandals** and dragged into the road before Council staff took it into protective custody. The owl was undamaged and swiftly reinstated.

**Spartle Team:** E. Dickie, J. Dickie, M. Forde, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, S. Michael, M. Orr, L. Rogers, C. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.

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Next meeting: 7.00pm on Mon 20 May in Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

[leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates](http://leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates)



Leith Central Community Council

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## Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



## Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

**Every Monday:**  
5-6pm at  
Leith Library  
28-30 Ferry Road  
Edinburgh  
EH6 4AE

**Every Friday:**  
4-5pm at  
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre  
Pilton Drive North  
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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 on Monday 13 May at 7.30pm in **Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent**

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