

Spurtle



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**September
2019**

No 288

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER

Free

DING-DONG OVER PARK DIN

Controversy surrounds use of Princes Street Gardens for outdoor events.

Last year, the Council asked the public how many events per year they felt were appropriate [bit.ly/33OeEAB]. The public replied, 'no more than five'. To widespread outrage, officials later approved nine summer events (due to prior legal commitments), and now the Transport & Environment Cmte is considering a separate two-day rave 'festival' on 20/21 September. Some folk on social media seethe at suggestions for transmitting live sport and Tattoo shows to any new Ross Bandstand.

Supporters of outdoor events say:

- Edinburgh has too few music venues of the right size in the right places;
- Public parks are public property, and should cater for a variety of tastes;
- Commercial events help fund public parks and green spaces across the city.

Objectors:

- resent exclusion from public gardens and views by ticketed events for private profit;
- dislike amplified music escaping from events and negatively impacting non-attendees in homes and streets elsewhere;
- fear for events staff working at decibel levels beyond health-and-safety limits;
- say events aren't properly monitored, either on-site or in terms of combined effect over time on neighbours;
- believe promoters' desire for an 'iconic background' doesn't respect or appropriately promote the Gardens and Edinburgh setting.

Some elected members concede Edinburgh Council's response has been incoherent and inadequate, that it has been swamped by the number of events seeking access, and confused by its own division of responsibilities across departments. These and other issues were usefully raised for review in motions (9.3, 9.6) by Cllrs Ross and Mowat at last month's full Council meeting [bit.ly/2MtKn4K], but met resistance.

RBS SITE NEW CHAPTER

St Andrew Square-based Ediston Properties seeks proposal-of-application-notice consent for a major development of the former Royal Bank of Scotland site at Fettes Row, Dundas Street, Eyre Terrace, and Eyre Place (Ref. 19/03803/PAN).

Leaving no potential stone unturned, it refers to demolishing existing buildings and erecting instead some mixed-use combination of: residential, hotel, office, senior-living/retirement housing, and other commercial uses including food and drink and health care, with associated landscaping/public realm/car parking/access arrangements.

In addition to previous such wish-lists by would-be developers over recent years, Ediston throws in a kitchen sink comprising student accommodation.

If approved (a formality at this stage), public exhibitions at Broughton St Mary's Parish Church are scheduled for 11 September and 17 October (both from noon-8pm). Expect a full application before Christmas, at which point the real hurly-burly will begin in earnest.



OLD IMPRESSION, MODERN FEATURES



This commemorative bronze medal, for sale at Lyon & Turnbull in Broughton Place on 4 September, recalls the Shah of Persia's first visit to the UK on 20 June 1873. Queen Victoria appointed him a Knight of the Order of the Garter. A sometimes modernising and reformist ruthless dictator, Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar balanced contesting Russian, Western, domestic political and religious influences before his assassination in 1896. The medal was estimated to fetch between £400 and £600 at auction.

OLD ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL



A Scottish Government spokesperson told *Spurtle* late last month: 'The reporters are aiming to complete their report for Scottish Ministers during August. Thereafter, Scottish Ministers will consider the report and then issue the decision notices.'

No report had appeared as we went to press. Anyway, don't hold your breath. Ministers have been known to take years making up their minds over such Appeal decisions.

Duddingston House Property and Urbanist Hotels' arrangement with the Council, whereby they have first right to develop the site, would be close to 'purifying the missives' (i.e. expiring) in 2022.

Might powerful people – opposed to the luxury-hotel scheme but unwilling, for whatever reason, to show their hand – deploy creative inertia?

Briefly



Active Cupid or frustrated driver? This amended sign appeared at the height of a recent **Union St** traffic diversion. Thanks to **Elizabeth Ewan** who alerted us to it.

As if you need reminding, **Scottish Gas Network** mains rootlings will result in closures of **Bellevue, Bellevue Cres, Scotland St and Great King St** between 2 Sept and 4 Oct. Enjoy.

Community councils' **four-yearly refresh** takes place this autumn. Those wishing to stand should submit nominations **between 9 and 30 Sept**. Elections (if necessary) will follow on 31 Oct.

Police had a quiet word with potentially 'rowdy' sailors in advance of shore leave last month, when patrol ship **HMS Forth** acted as guard ship (floating gin palace) for the **Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo**. Strangely, no quiet words were shared with each day's **potentially rowdy VIP guests**.

The appearance of a sinkhole closed **Broughton Rd** on 5–7 August while Council workers assessed and filled it. The size of a mobile phone at the surface, it was the depth of a broom handle below.

One notable hit among this year's **Edinburgh International Festival and Fringe** offerings was the pop-up tranquillity hub in **St Andrew Sq**. Disarmingly simple, it comprised a large area of **open grass with peripheral seating**. Here, visitors could begin to imagine what it would be like to live in a world with **less noise, reduced visual clutter, and precious few opportunities to spend money**. *Sputtle* very much hopes it returns next year, or even that it may be **retained permanently all-year-round**.

Local gardens were visited by a flurry of **painted ladies** last month. Some 10M of these attractive butterflies were moving from **tropical Africa to the Arctic** on their decennial migration. JRM and others recorded impressions of these flutterings here: [bit.ly/2KGgdru].

NTBCC's meeting was visited by a flurry of **elected representatives** last month. Some 4 local politicians attended from 3 Council wards, 2 rarely before seen in **Bellevue Cres**. One, apparently exhausted by the journey, managed **only a wan smile**. He left after two hours without uttering a syllable.

New traffic lights at **Bonnington Toll** will include a 5-second early release phase for cyclists. They will **come into effect in Oct**, once resurfacing and painting of stop lines/bike lanes are completed.

Cornerstone on rocky ground

Cornerstone Property Development's latest appeal to the Scottish Government, this time concerning a flat at 8 Baxter's Pl, has failed (Ref CLUD-230-2009).

On 6 August the Reporter found against Cornerstone's claim of lawful use of the residential property for short-term visitor letting by up to 6 people staying at least 7 nights while 'living together as a family'. That last stipulation struck many people as unenforceable.

The Reporter considered the proposal a material change of use for which there are no development rights. He was 'not convinced' by Cornerstone's numerous arguments and precedents, some of them English. See [bit.ly/30sWnXu].

Cornerstone's alternative options for 7–8 Baxter's Place appear to be running out. As we went to press, there remained one unresolved application to convert flats here into a boutique hotel.



One more bang of the drum

Having watched with interest events surrounding Drum Property Group's plans for Stead's Place, Edinburgh architect Gordon Duffy (Studio DuB) felt compelled to present *contra* proposals for the site. His thoughts were developed in June 2018, and were shared with the Save Leith Walk Campaign that October. As Drum appeals the Council's refusal of Drum's plans [bit.ly/2IOLU0L], Duffy explains his alternatives again.

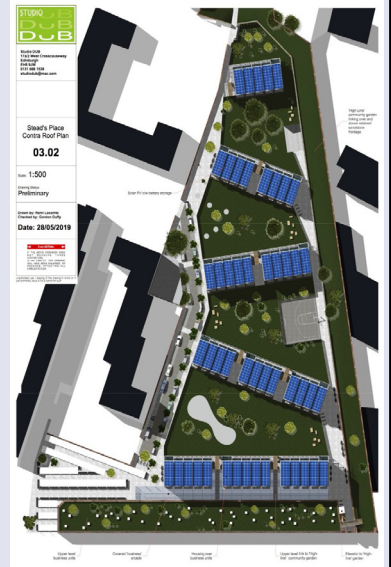
The original developers were of course simply following a brief prepared by the Council in 2008, the disconnect here being that CEC could have consulted the community before the land was sold-on but didn't.

My objective was to show an alternative possibility which retained the red sandstone front under threat, allowing continued occupation of the units whilst allowing development at the rear.

Key elements of the Studio DuB *contra* proposal:

- Small business 'arcade'/community business hub (as opposed to retail) – 630m² located to the rear of the sandstone frontage;
- Street market at the corner;
- Affordable housing behind – plan shows c.200 housing units;
- Roof garden at the old viaduct (as mooted by others 2012) but hereto extended around and atop the sandstone range of 106–54 Leith Walk forming an 'L' shaped community garden;
- Residents' communal gardens between affordable housing elements.

Any development should favour affordable housing to meet clear community and citywide needs. Retention of the frontage as proposed here would embolden the local business community's commercial offer.



Shops till they drop

The Council is consulting on how to revise its City Centre Retail Core Supplementary Guidance.

To Fringe-spoiled locals, this may sound slightly less exciting than naked elected members juggling cheetahs to the soundtrack of Pirates of the Caribbean, but it's important. Especially at a time when people increasingly buy on-line, putting traditional high streets under pressure.

New guidelines will determine if and how shop spaces are used for other purposes, and what they might look like – changes which could radically affect the character of well-established areas.

Leith Central Community Council (LCCC) opposes conversions from shops to homes in tenemental streets. They say disbenefits to residents include loss of amenity, the need to shop further afield, and reduced 'natural surveillance'.

You have until 20 September to respond online here: [bit.ly/2TgJ1dW].



Low-down on London Street

As ever, the owner of No. 24A London Street has established a sumptuous summer garden area of joy. This year, he has surpassed himself, much to the approval of a feline co-owner often to be seen reclining there on a throne.

In folklore, such tortoiseshell cats have a reputation for bringing luck, especially to Scots and Irish households. However, this may come at a price. A recent US survey has concluded that many tortoiseshells are prone to hiss, chase, and bite the humans who presume to own them.

Apart from my No 1 favourite cat poem – ‘The Cat and the Moon’ by W.B. Yeats (‘Do you dance, Minnaloushe, do you dance?’) – I think this particular cat may favour Elizabeth Bishop’s ‘Lullaby for the Cat’:

‘Minnow, go to sleep and dream,
Close your great big eyes;
Round your bed Events prepare
The pleasantest surprise. ...’ —JRM



Briefly



Photo: R.R.A. Davis.

A two-car collision occurred at 8am on 11 Aug in **Broughton St**. Police, Fire and Ambulance services attended, and the road was closed until 10.20am. Two days later a second collision took place downhill outside **The Phoenix/Broughton** at 3.30am. A car hit a skip, moving it through 90° and spreading the contents over the road, before driving off dented but unbowed.

A **Council spokesperson** tells us that, owing to the changes in the original scope of works following public consultation, work on **Picardy PI** has taken 4 months longer than first envisaged. It will end on budget in Jan 2020. **Design of the new tramstop** is under way, and expected to be ‘substantially completed’ in the fourth quarter of 2019 following which the earlier public consultation process will be ‘reinvigorated’.

Developer **Places for People** has identified a need for remedial fire-prevention upgrades to steel beams at the **Engine Yard in Shrubhill**. Work will take up to 6 weeks.

LCCC broadly welcomes **Tram Diversion Route Resurfacing Works**, but regrets lack of pavement resurfacing and drainage repairs/upgrades. It requests **repair of damage/wear and tear** after tramworks end, and timely consultation on reinstating setted streets.

Some **70k+ books** will arrive at Topping Booksellers on **Blenheim PI** in advance of a revised opening date **late this month**.

In Issue 285 (p.3), we reported lack of transparency in how Edinburgh’s **Licensing Dept** approved a local business’s application for extended hours on the basis of (unverified) **letters of support from ‘all’ neighbours** in the same tenement. Some neighbours now deny offering any such backing. The **NTBCC**, concerned at possible fraud, has raised the matter with Police.

Careless whispers have reached us of a major beer festival at the **Mansfield Traquair Centre** in Aug 2020. Excited reactions appeared on **Facebook**, but – like midsummer burps in a lover’s ear – **all traces soon vanished**. So far, MTC has not responded to our questions.

Developers behind the **Edinburgh St James** complex have gone to the Court of Session to try and block developers of the **Dunard Centre** building a concert venue behind Dundas House on **St Andrew Sq**. They say the proposed ‘hideous’ concrete structure would block views to and from their own handsome hotel, popularly known as **‘The Golden Turd’**.

Flooding in Edinburgh

From the Scotsman, 3 September 1887:

The broken and stormy weather which, during the past few days, has been making itself disagreeably and even seriously felt in various parts of the country, yesterday included Edinburgh within its scope, and the Scottish capital was visited by one of the most severe rainstorms it has experienced for years.

The rainfall recorded in the district was not, it is true, phenomenally heavy—it was somewhat over half an inch, or, to be strictly accurate, 0.68 in.; but the downpour was so sharp and sudden as to cause flooding more or less serious in many parts of the city.

The houses in Greenside experienced the most serious effects of the storm. A number of small houses lie there at the foot of two steep hills—Greenside on the south and the Calton Hill on the east—and at this spot, owing to the converging of the two streams of rain, and to the surface drains becoming choked and ultimately covered to the depth of a few inches by the large quantity of earth washed down from the Calton Hill, the rain rapidly accumulated, and at length rushed down the stairs leading to the underground houses. In half an hour, even after the rainfall had ceased, the floors were deluged to a depth of from six inches to nearly two feet.

Altogether the houses of eight families were flooded. All the people affected are poor, and could ill afford to sustain the damage caused to their belongings



Photo: Alan McIntosh

Creative Catchment

‘Our Linen Stories’ is the latest initiative from *Journeys in Design Scotland*. As the exhibition opens at *Dovecot Studios* this month, curator John Ennis reflects on *Broughton’s linen heritage and the creative energies alive in our area today*.

What is it like to hear there’s a chance to build a new life in Scotland? What happens when you’re offered the opportunity to practise your skills in a new homeland?

In 1723, 12 families of skilled Huguenot linen weavers from Northern France were encouraged to settle in Broughton village as part of a drive to improve the emerging linen industry here. Picardy Place marks the site of their original supported housing, and the exhibition features a rare map showing Picardie Village before development. This is the first of Our Linen Stories.

Edinburgh, particularly around Leith, has always been open to those seeking refuge from harsher homelands. Successive migrations have brought waves of creative energy, helping to create a diverse cultural appeal. Renowned sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi grew up in Montgomery Street, and early Italian families brought new food cultures to Leith Walk, just as Polish families leave their mark today.

For this current endeavour, *Journeys in Design* has facilitated the weaving of a brand-new linen by Polish-Cuban designer Claudia Escobar (now a well-established Leither), displayed for the first time in the Dovecot exhibition.

When times threaten to narrow a nation’s embrace, it’s worth remembering how much better our own lives can become by offering a better life to others. ‘Our Linen Stories’ runs from 16 Sept.–25 Jan. at the *Dovecot Studios*, 10 *Infirmery Street*, and is free. For details, visit: [<https://ourlinenstories.com/>].



Moreover ...



A close cousin of the rough-hewn squinty-eyed **Bellevue Cres owl** has appeared in the Barony St Community Garden. In *Spurtle's* opinion, it's a marked improvement. This gruff, belligerent-looking old-style **parkie** seems well suited to defending play equipment against vandals.

Council Leader and Leith Central ward's **Cllr Adam McVey** responded to frequent Twitter complaints last month, and promised to raise the issue of overfilled communal bins at the east end of **E Claremont St** with the relevant department. There is not enough capacity here for the many Claremont Ct, E Claremont St, and **154 McDonald Rd** flats that currently dispose of rubbish here.

Cllr McVey began 6 weeks' adoption leave on 23 Aug as he and his partner welcomed 2 boys into their family. **Cllr Cammy Day** will stand in until McVey returns in Oct.

The application in principle to demolish **Smithie's Bar** at 49-51 Eyre Pl (Ref. 19/02460/PPP), and replace it with a 3+-storey block of flats, **has been withdrawn**. See Issue 287.

A chiropractic clinic's application to attach a 1.5m x 1.8m sign to the west end of **Broughton St Lane** has been refused (19/00478/ADV). The white stainless-steel appendage would also have advertised **other businesses** in the lane, but officials showed backbone in deciding the proposal would have a **detrimental impact** on the surrounding area's historic character.

Edinburgh NW Foodbank issued an urgent appeal last month for: breakfast cereal, UHT milk, coffee, biscuits, long-life fruit juice, tinned fruit, tinned veg, curry/pasta sauce, rice, and tinned rice/custard. Donations to Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, **Bellevue Cres**.

In response to a Council consultation on potential **Low Emission Zones**, the NTBCC has called for the LEZ area to be extended from the city centre northwards to **include residential areas**. It calls for an extended grace period for diesel cars, but urges the city to adopt **the highest possible standards**, not the minimum required by legislation.

In **Issue 287** p.1, we accidentally omitted Cllr Mowat from a list of **city-centre councillors** actively tackling waste-collection problems.

Spurtle 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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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: 7pm on Mon 16 September.
Venue to be confirmed

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

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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
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4-5pm at
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NEW TOWN &
BROUGHTON
COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Representing locals' views
to City of Edinburgh Council.

You're very welcome to attend.

Come along and make a
difference. The next meeting is
on Monday 9 September
at 7.30pm in

**Broughton St Mary's Parish
Church, Bellevue Crescent**

www.ntbcc.org.uk

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