

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER

Free

DISQUIET IN THE PARKS

Active citizens have been much exercised by developments in Edinburgh public parks over the last month.

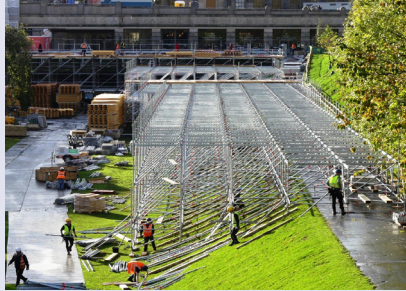
First, a social-media storm followed confusing reportage in the *Scotsman* about an apparent refusal by Council leaders to cap the number of events in Princes Street Gardens. Culture & Communities Convener Donald Wilson brought a little calm with a clarification in the *Spurtle* two days later [bit.ly/3616INw].

Second, a social-media typhoon followed the erection (from mid-October) in East Princes Street Gardens (ESPG) of a new and greatly extended Christmas market. Any greenery is fast disappearing beneath Underbelly scaffolding.

Third, Friends of Pilrig Park are battling yet another application to site an oversized cabaret tent slap bang in the middle next summer. See page 3.

Regarding EPSG, public outrage focused around: (1) Destruction of grass and further loss of peaceful amenity; (2) Delegation of decision making by councillors to officials, and a consequent democratic deficit; (3) Insufficient 'consultation, consideration, and accountability'; (4) Wholesale commercialisation of common-good land; (5) Very extensive building, erected without the necessary planning permission. See [bit.ly/2PhSUIB].

Underbelly negotiated a two-year extension for its management of the Christmas and Hogmanay Festivals in June this year. *Spurtle* predicts independent political challenges – perhaps centred around affordable housing and preserving public spaces – in the local-authority elections of 2022. Legal challenges may come sooner.



EMBROIDERING THE FACTS



As *Spurtle* went to press, it was still unclear whether Britain would be leaving the European Union with a deal, or without a deal, or not yet, or not at all. No such uncertainty of place affects our beloved neighbours to the north, where the soft but distinct border with Leith at Pilrig St was recently reaffirmed in some aspirational yarn-bombing: 'Welcome to the independent socialist republic of Leith.'

LATEST POWDERHALL PLANS

On 23/24 October, Collective Architecture exhibited its latest plans for the Council-owned gap site at 165 Broughton Road.

The housing-led mixed-use development will include a 'new-build intergenerational nursery, with older persons' housing', mixed tenure homes, and a variety of public and semi-public spaces. The existing Category B-listed stable block will be converted into a 'works and events space'.

The plans are being taken forward in two stages. On display so far have been alternative layouts for the bowling greens. *Spurtle* favours a south-facing nursery arrangement (pictured), with dedicated outdoor play areas screened from Broughton Rd by planting.

We like the idea of a path connecting Powderhall Road to Redbraes Park, especially if Sustrans money can be found to form ramped access. We were surprised and pleased at how much open green space (3,500 sq.m.) is envisaged to the north of the nursery, but foresee tensions between those who will want it exclusively for Broughton Primary School, and those who would prefer a mix of other uses such as allotments or mini-tennis courts.



There is little detail so far about what the buildings will look like, or what they'll be made of. Expect a full planning application early next year.

Plans for the rest of the development site are on hold while the Council seeks Scottish Government funds towards refurbishing the stables, and private-sector finance for the housing. We expect more detailed plans for this in late 2020, but for now we can consider four potential accommodation layouts with fairly large open areas between them and a lot of greenery. Hard surfaces will drain into a large underground tank where unspecified treatment will remove ground contaminants (chiefly metals) before draining into the Water of Leith.

The display boards are available on the Council's Consultation Hub [bit.ly/31PIoLm], and you have until 15 November to submit comments.

BROUGHTON-TO-THE-SEA TRAMWORKS BEGIN

Work to extend the tramway from Broughton to Newhaven will begin at Constitution Street on 18 November. Also starting this month are 'enabling works' to create an access lane for Leith Walk traffic once construction starts in the spring.

The full construction programme, designed to minimise disruption to residents and businesses, is shown below. Alternatively, go to [bit.ly/2B3pBkD] for a handy confusing map.

- Queen Charlotte St–Constitution Pl: autumn 2019–autumn 2020
- London Road–Manderston St: enabling works, autumn 2019–spring 2020; main works, spring 2020–autumn 2021
- Foot of the Walk–Coatfield Ln: autumn 2019–spring 2021
- Ocean Dr: spring 2020–autumn 2020
- Melrose Dr–Newhaven: spring 2020–summer 2021
- Rennie's Isle–Ocean Terminal: summer 2020–spring 2021
- Tower Pl–Rennie's Isle: spring 2021–autumn 2021
- Coatfield Ln–Queen Charlotte St: spring 2021–spring 2022
- Picardy Pl–London Rd: spring 2021–spring 2022
- Ocean Dr–Melrose Dr: summer 2021–autumn 2021
- Melrose Dr: autumn 2021–spring 2022.
- Manderston St–Foot of the Walk: autumn 2021–summer 2022
- Constitution Pl–Tower Pl: autumn 2021–summer 2022
- Picardy Pl–York Pl: winter 2021/22–summer 2022

Preparations over the past six months have apparently shown that the £207.3M budget is realistic. Passenger services are scheduled to begin in spring 2023. Full details of a £2.4M Support for Business package will be unveiled early next year.



Briefly

The body of a 15-year-old girl was discovered in **King George V Park** early on 21 Oct. As we went to press, Police were treating the death as unexplained but not suspicious. Many locals have been left shocked by this tragedy.

Bellevue has reopened at last. Now take a deep breath. **Scottish Gas Network** is to replace old gas mains with new ones in **Stockbridge**. Work will start on 6 Jan and last 30 weeks. A **drop-in event** to explain it all will take place between 4.45pm and 7.45pm on 11 Nov in **Stockbridge Library**. More here: [bit.ly/35EnGRE].

The former Clydesdale Bank at **1 Croall Pl** has now been let. The 2,764 sq.ft premises are currently Class 2, but may be suitable for **alternative use** subject to planning say the agents.

Old Royal High School. No news yet. Will report online as and when.

Pre-application discussions between planning strategists **Montagu Evans** and the Council, are in progress. They concern space behind the Edinburgh Playhouse on **Greenside Pl** and proposals for a new performance/rehearsal studio, serviced apartments, and rooftop event venue/bar/café. Neighbours in **Baxter's and Blenheim Pls** are concerned about potential noise and loss of daylight. [bit.ly/21SKbbG]. They have sought and received official assurance that **residential amenity** will be properly considered in any future planning application.

Last month, Broughton St Mary's *Broughton Beacon* recirculated statistics about the **Edinburgh Food Project**. From Jan–Jun 2019, the food bank fed 5,307 adults and 2,074 children. There was a **48% increase in referrals** compared to the same period in 2018.

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will be at 7pm on Mon 4 Nov in **Drummond Community High School**. Charles Everitt will talk on the *History of Wildlife Crime in Scotland*.

Following a PAN exhibition in Sept, an application for full planning permission on the large site at **14 Ashley Pl** is expected soon. Glencairn Properties proposes up to 63 flats (25% affordable) in three 5–6-storey blocks, associated infrastructure, and landscaping. The developers hope to complete by Christmas 2021.

Broughton Rd was resurfaced between **Pilrig St** and **Broughton Junction** over seven nights last month. The job needed to be done, and it needed to be done now before diverted traffic levels increase during **tramworks**. Observers have praised the efficiency and quality of the work.

The Quaich Project (involving a new catering hub, performance venue, and re-landscaping in **W Princes St Gdns**) will consult the public on latest plans from **4 Nov to 1 Dec**. The events are open to all and take place at various places across Edinburgh, including **Central Library** and **Leith Library**. For full details, go here: [bit.ly/33YWziH].

Less haste, more enforcement needed

The Transport & Environment Cmte last month considered a report evaluating the Council's 20 mph speed limit zones since their introduction in March last year [bit.ly/2BreuLM].

The report notes a small reduction in overall speeds of 1.34 mph across 66 surveyed sites. A 'substantial reduction in road-traffic collisions and casualties' emerged from the first 11 months' data, but it's too early to link this to the new speed limit. Such robust statistics will take 3 years to compile.

The Council has received complaints about non-compliance with 20 mph limits on around 220 Edinburgh streets, and will undertake speed surveys before considering extra measures.

Local streets cited were: Abercromby Pl, Broughton Pl, Rd and St, Drummond Pl, E London St, Eyre Pl, Glenogle Rd, Leith Walk, London St, McDonald Pl and Rd, Northumberland St, Queen St, Raeburn Pl, Regent Ter, Royal Ter, Scotland St, Warriston Rd, and Waterloo Pl. Or in other words, just about everywhere.

No wonder, then, that while the public's response to the 20mph scheme was positive, there is widespread support for stricter enforcement.

Meanwhile, in a related development, locals have been discussing on Twitter an unforeseen consequence of compliant vehicles bunching at 20 mph. There are now fewer and shorter gaps in traffic, making it harder for pedestrians to traverse streets away from formal crossings. So, it may be argued, those who try are more likely to be hurt but not fatally. Every cloud has a silver bumper.



Mixed news from up the hill

To predictable groans from heritage purists and vacationing light sleepers, KEASIM Events wants to erect another outdoor 'festival village' above Waverley Mall this winter and next.

If approved, the events will run from 15 November to 1 January. KEASIM says it has a noise management strategy that will minimise disruption to local residents. *Spurtle* doubts the practical effectiveness of such measures, which don't address the life-affirming racket of visitors awash with high spirits. In any case, pleas for Edinburgh Council to enforce noise-pollution conditions tend to be drowned out by the sound of tourists spending cash in the city centre. More at [bit.ly/2NITq5R].

In better news, a survey of trees in St Andrew Square Gardens suggests their health can be improved by a combination of reduced footfall (fewer events), pruning, and improvement of soil condition.

This will cost more money, but on recent evidence the proprietors aren't short of a bob or two, and have the best interests of the area at heart. More at [bit.ly/33XncnV].



Locals bemused by return of diggers

Contractors began work again early last month on the narrow, steeply sloping strip of land between Broughton Rd and the Claremonts.

Neighbours downhill were immediately alarmed at the lack of safety fencing between their properties and the earth-moving machinery.

All were surprised that work had restarted, as they hadn't received any indication that planning conditions imposed by the Council and Scottish Government Reporter two years ago had yet been met [bit.ly/2Iw1C1s].

These conditions include:

- prior submission of full details on sheet piling, retaining walls, Cribloc walls and tree-root bridging
- details about the proposed new access and service road
- a plan to minimise noise and disruption during construction.

Residents swiftly contacted Planning Enforcement, local elected members, and the New Town & Broughton Community Council. *Spurtle* will report further developments as we hear of them.

In October 2016, Provincial Property Holdings Ltd successfully appealed against Edinburgh Council's refusal of planning permission to build 8 town houses on the area here known locally as Sandy Hill.



New Town North exhibition no time soon

Plans for a second PAN exhibition of proposals for the old RBS site between Dundas Street and King George V Park have been postponed. The event had been scheduled for October, but will now take place on 5 December.

Ross McNulty, speaking for developers Ediston, denied there were problems behind the scenes. He told *Spurtle* the delay was caused chiefly by slow replies from statutory consultees, and careful consideration being given to those responses which had already been received from Historic Environment Scotland and the public.

For more on this story, see [bit.ly/2pm8rvO].

Edinburgh on high: Ivory palace on the Earthen Mound

In Issue 289 we featured a rare and fascinating painting by William Herdman which proved the original site of the 'Broughton Boy' sculpture above 32 Broughton Street. The Liverpoolian artist also painted several other significant Edinburgh landmarks during sojourns here.

Perhaps the most notable of these is this dramatic 1854 view of William Playfair's spectacular Free Church College (now New College), and work in progress on the Mound [bit.ly/2oViEzM]. Built on the ruins of Mary of Guise's 16th-century palace on Castle Hill, Playfair's gothic building was and is one of the glories of Edinburgh's skyline.

This was fully appreciated by Herdman, and, in this painting in oil on canvas, the building rises like a spectral ivory palace from the Earthen Mound. In the foreground is a ramshackle wooden hut, perhaps used for storage or shelter by workers on the site. Equally alluring is the 'human interest' – shawled Newhaven herring-wives, idling soldiers from the Castle, street-sellers, and children playing on a spoil heap with pieces of wood.

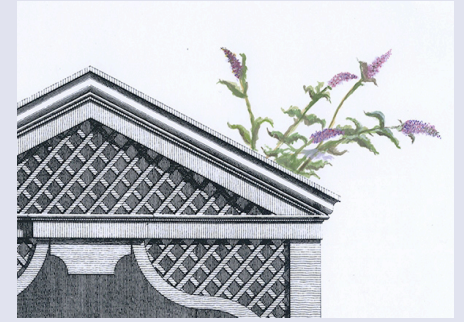
Presumably, this was a weekend market-day when the stupendous workforce with horses and carts *inter alia* was having a well-deserved rest.

The picture (not currently on display) is in the holdings of the City Art Centre, to whom we record thanks for this reproduction.—JRM



Image: City Art Centre, City of Edinburgh Museums & Galleries.

Briefly



Dion Kitson's new works on paper appear in an exhibition at **Le Roi Fou on Forth St** until 16 Nov. *I Too Was in Arcadia* comprises a response to the work and ideas of the late **Ian Hamilton Finlay**, in which Kitson immersed himself during a residency hosted by the restaurant last summer. Pictured is a detail from '**The Shelter**' (2019).

New and additional signage outside and within Broughton St Mary's Parish Church on **Bellevue Cres** was approved by Council planners last month (Ref. 19/03762/ADV). In general, it is an improvement on the previous signage, which told passers-by uninteresting things in a style they didn't want to read. However, provisional wording for the **new display case** at the foot of the steps has raised eyebrows. The statement extends a generous and heart-warming welcome to all in 104 words; 103 words containing **5 errors in spelling, grammar or nomenclature** which are already causing stomachs to knot in parts of the neighbourhood. Does the Church of Scotland welcome pedants?

In these bad-tempered and ill-mannered times, it is a pleasure to come across irresistible politeness. On **St Mark's Path** beside the former waste transfer station, the following note is attached to a fence. 'Dear friends and dog walkers, It has been noticed that there seems to be **a lot of dog poo** being left on the path. I am aware that it is not always possible for people to clean up after their dogs. However, I would gratefully appreciate it if there could be a **shared responsibility to clean up the mess**. Maybe if you have a spare dog poo bag you would do the kind act of helping out and cleaning up a dog mess if you see one. This is such a lovely area, and it would be so **much nicer** if we could keep it clean. Thankyou to everyone who is already helping.' Westminster take note.

Michael's Grill & Seafood Place opened on **Eyre Pl** last month. Twenty-nine-year-old chef and proprietor **Michael Neave** has two other restaurants, both in the Old Town.

Leith Central Community Council has negotiated a return to **McDonald Rd Library** for its monthly meetings. **New Town & Broughton CC** has secured additional CEC funding for its monthly meetings in **Bellevue Cres**. (Issue 289). Democrats are rejoicing.

Coffee Magic on **Rodney St** now operates until 3pm from Thurs-Sun.

Pilrig resists persistent performers

Leith Central Community Council and Friends of Pilrig Park have objected in the strongest possible terms to another proposal to site the Ladyboys of Bangkok/La Clique cabarets in Pilrig Park for 30 days next summer.

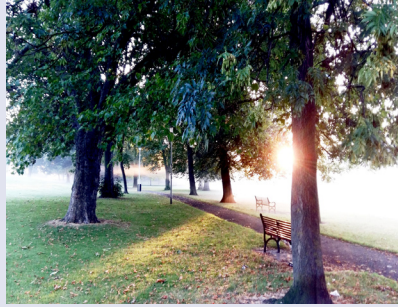
Their reasons include:

- Prolonged and excessive loss of amenity to regular community users during summer holidays
- Noise, litter, disturbance of residents
- Potential damage to park and infrastructure
- Constrained access and local traffic/parking congestion giving concern for public safety
- Duration of the event more than double the maximum period cited in the Council's own *Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto*
- Availability of larger and more suitable venues at Inverleith and the Meadows.

Locals last fended off the Ladyboys in January this year, securing an intervention by CEC's Executive Director of Place Paul Lawrence (Issues 281, 282). This time, they question why the application was submitted without a detailed site plan, and note disapprovingly that the consultation period coincided with elections when the community council was unable to operate.

Former Leith Walk councillor Nick Gardner says, 'We are surprised and disappointed that the Council is contemplating this proposal anew.'

'It suggests a failure on the Council's part to understand the park it owns, and a failure to manage the expectations of the applicant as to what the park can offer.'



Sunday school rowdyism in Dublin Street

From the Edinburgh Evening News, 13 November 1900.

At Edinburgh City Police Court to-day. Five boys, James Dall (14), 27a Cumberland Street; Thomas Harrower (12), 26a Cumberland Street; James Wood (14), 10 N.-E. Cumberland Street Lane; Thomas Bryden (12), 6 Cumberland Street, and Alexander Henderson (11), 9 Cumberland Street, were all charged with creating a disturbance in Dublin Street and Broughton Market, and maliciously knocking and pulling the window shutters of Dublin Street Baptist Church during service on Sunday evening, the 28th October last.* They pleaded guilty.

It was stated that the accused were part of a gang of rough lads who congregated in this locality on Sunday afternoons and evenings, and were a source of considerable annoyance to the residents. Most of the boys belonged to the Sunday-schools, for three-quarters of an hour previous to the opening of which every Sunday there was a perfect pandemonium in that locality.

Bailie Brown said he was surprised that the officers of the school did not make better arrangements to prevent this sort of thing. He warned the boys that if they appeared before him again they would be birched, and meanwhile put them under caution for their future conduct.

* *The congregation worshipped here in a Middle Pointed style church at No. 61 [bit.ly/2ByqaDa] from 1858 until they moved to their current location at 14 Canonmills in 1987.—AM*



Moreover ...



In a series of tweets last month, former Holyrood Housing Minister **Marco Biagi** detailed a personal history of mental issues which intermittently dogged his private life and in 2016 curtailed his political career as the MSP for **Edinburgh Northern & Leith** [bit.ly/35nJ8do]. Biagi's revelations came on World Mental Health Day (10 Oct), and were aimed at encouraging others suffering similarly to **come forward** and seek help. 'I feel we are finally getting to a place where we can talk about this, where we can accept that serious ill-health is something that can affect us all.' His **courageous candour** met with widespread admiration. Since leaving politics, Biagi has been studying for a PhD at Yale University.

'ello, 'ello, 'ello. The long-awaited **policebox café** opposite the primary school on **Broughton Rd** opened its flap for the first time on 1 Oct. Passers-by can **warm up or refresh** here every weekday from 8am till 4pm.

In a sign of **Princes St's** fluctuating fortunes, a **Poundland** branch is to open at No. 120-120A in a building known as the '**Pride of Edinburgh**' (Ref. 19/04802/ADV). The shop will stand opposite a statue of the **Rev Thomas Guthrie**, recalled on the plinth as 'a friend of the poor and the oppressed'. Back in Feb, the **Edinburgh Evening News** suggested as many as 30 shops could be lured eastwards from shabby Princes St to the new **St James Quarter's** 85 glittering retail units (bit.ly/33G4MrP). **Shopping and leisure components** of the complex are expected to be ready in Oct 2020.

STOP PRESS: It emerges that Underbelly designed the scaffolding deck in **EPS Gdns** (p.1) to protect newly re-landscaped **Scottish National Gallery** access. Discussions began with CEC in April but weren't signed off until 12 Oct. A (late) **planning application** will now follow, but is unlikely to be processed before 2020. Consultation with public and stakeholders will precede new **Winter Festival** arrangements in 2022.

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.

Post: Spartle, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ.

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LEITH WALK POLICEBOX

TYPEWRONGER BOOKS celebrates 2nd birthday with books, jellybabies and cake on 5 NOVEMBER, 11am+ Join us at 5pm for **WORLD-RECORD ATTEMPT** on number of people in an Edinburgh policebox.

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. 18 November, McDonald Road Library.

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>



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f/BenMacSNP @BenMacpherson

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
Edinburgh
EH5 1NF

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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 11 November** at 7.30pm in

Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbcc.org.uk