

Spurtle



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No 304

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

GREEN LIGHT FOR 'NEW TOWN QUARTER'

On 17 February the Council's Development Management Subcommittee granted planning permission for demolition of the former Royal Bank of Scotland buildings between Dundas St and King George V Park, and erection of a mixed-use development comprising 349 residential units, office/retail space for 800 people, a 116-bed hotel, and ancillary uses (20/03034/FUL). You can watch the whole (very long) meeting here [bit.ly/3qLrhY7].

The approved proposal by Ediston and Orion Capital Managers comprises seven blocks of up to seven storeys, with a new pedestrian/cycle route through the middle. They will shortly bring forward an amendment to replace the hotel with housing, and may also address concerns about loss of privacy among Applecross residents on Eyre Pl.

Officials' support

Councillors were advised by the Director of Planning [bit.ly/2Nmh7yD] that the designs would preserve the character and setting of nearby listed buildings, and any negative impacts would be outweighed by the benefits of the scheme. The plans would not remove or detract from key characteristic components of the Conservation Area.

The proposed mix of uses, and the impact on views from King George V Park, would be acceptable, although Historic Environment Scotland noted that reduction of the view north from Dundonald St was a negative impact on the World Heritage Site.

The report argued that: 'The design makes a positive contribution to the area and will add to its sense of place ... The heights of the buildings are appropriate for the site, whilst the elevations and materials proposed generally respond to the context of the area ... The loss of trees along Dundas Street is justified in design terms.' The Cockburn Association and Edinburgh World Heritage broadly agreed. HES offered no objection.

Compromises

The report found that, across the whole development, 8% of the rooms would not meet Edinburgh Design Guidance standards for daylighting. However, this was an acceptable compromise in the effort to achieve 'good townscape'.

A legal agreement should be reached to guarantee a £123.5k contribution towards the adjacent public park. It was later agreed to seek more if paths need to be widened.

Councillors on the DMSC eventually voted 7:4 in favour of the proposal, with conditions. So ends a saga which began in 2011 when Royal Bank of Scotland first announced plans to redevelop part of its estate here before announcing in 2015 that it would leave the site entirely.

Opposition

Some 167 people opposed the latest plans, not because they rejected development but because they sought improvements. Elected representatives and amenity groups presented their case, but there was some consternation among locals afterwards that the well-formulated arguments of Fettes Row, Royal Cres, and Drummond Pl residents, and of the New Town & Broughton Community Council and Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland, prompted only one question from councillors on the subcommittee. There was also disappointment that so much long-standing, well-reasoned effort by individuals appears to have been useless against the greater resources of developers and organisations.

Mixed view

Spurtle shares some local reservations, particularly regarding the questionable quality of on-site green space and the negative cumulative effect of 'justifiable' minor departures from planning policy. Cllr Booth counted seven.

However, we still find things to applaud in the approved plans, not least their economic consequences. The return of life, activity, and money will be welcome, and may revive the fortunes of independent businesses across Broughton and Stockbridge. Work will begin this autumn and end in 2024.



IT'S DOGGED AS DOES IT



One year on, and with little sign of life returning to normal any time soon, we're all being advised to persevere with the face coverings, keep a safe distance, clean paws, and self-isolate when necessary. In short, be patient not patients. The two characters pictured above appear bubbled in Forth Floorings on Brandon Terrace. Spurtle admires the mask-and-sou'wester style, the perfect combo now that another Edinburgh spring is nearly upon us.

CRACKING STRUCTURE NEEDS BT'S TLC

British Telecom seeks planning permission for extensive repairs to the Category B-listed Waverley Telephone Exchange at 12-14 East London Street (21/00598/LBC).

It has appointed specialist contractor Sika to fix mastic deterioration between the structure's concrete panels. This failure has let water in, which has caused the panels to crack and delaminate. Spurtle wonders why BT didn't act earlier.

Sika proposes cleaning all concrete surfaces, repairing or removing damaged concrete, removing corrosion from exposed reinforcement, and applying a protective coating.

Designed by Robert Sadder in 1964, with an extra floor added in the 1970s, Historic Environment Scotland says the structure is 'a fine, geometrically designed Modernist building, with strong compartmentalised facades, and a significant example of 1960s public architecture in Edinburgh'. HES says it demonstrates the 'forthright ideals of planning and post-war modern architecture', and praises its 'strong contribution' to the immediate streetscape.

Gifford et al., in *The Buildings of Scotland: Edinburgh*, describe it as 'fascist-looking', but were kinder about Sadder's delightful Library/Herbarium at the Botanic and his new interior for West Register House. The Forfar-born architect died in 2008, aged 96, leaving £850k to the Salvation Army's Community Care Service in Angus.

For more on the Waverley Exchange, and in particular its tiled panel designed by Ken Clark, see Issues 196, 203, 205, and [bit.ly/3jZ35yN].



Briefly



Time has stopped at **Broughton St Mary's Parish Church** recently. Until the clock is fixed or rewound, it remains fixed at 11.30. Or 6.26, depending on your point of view.

An Edinburgh University webpage currently gives links to useful **Covid-related support on:** teenagers' issues; mental health; domestic violence; hunger; vaccination; employment rights; schools and parenting; transport; pregnancy; and personal finances. Visit: [bit.ly/3pGBHHq].

A new Saturday/Sunday carry-out has opened at **10 Rodney St**, otherwise home to Coffee Magic. **Mana Poke** serves traditional Hawaiian cuisine using **raw marinated fish**, with vegetables, rice, pickles, seeds, and umami-rich sauces. Visit the website [bit.ly/2M7qp16] to order from the menu and arrange a pick-up or delivery time (noon–8pm).



The wintry freeze brought by Storm Darcy encouraged a remarkable **outpouring of creative talent** across the barony last month. As well as the traditional **snow-people** of all shapes and sizes, we admired ice ducks in **Inverleith**, loosely interpreted rockets with external fuel tanks in **Bellevue Pl**, and this well-fed feline whose ear fell off in **St Mark's Park**. Meanwhile, thrill-seekers briefly converted the upper section of **Dublin St** into a ski slope. It also constituted an exciting new challenge for those locals who have grown bored of **dodging footway cyclists** here over recent years.

Hats off to local entrepreneurs **Max and Leo Freemantle-Zee**. The brothers, aged 12 and 9, are offering to wash **local cars, bikes, and motorcycles** for £10 at weekends between 10am and 4pm. For details, see **flyers** circulating around the neighbourhood.

Word reaches us that not all locals want to have a **Covid jag** and aren't taking up their invitations to do so. **That is of course their right**. But could they not advise medical staff of their intention **not to attend**? That way, time and supplies would not be wasted, and other people who **do want to protect themselves** could get the chance earlier. It's not complicated – it's just good manners.

Not pretty in pink?

Early last month, Edinburgh Council applied to build on the site of the former bowling greens at Powderhall (21/00381/FUL).

It proposes a single structure containing 27 housing units for people aged 55+ and an early years nursery for 128 children. Private gardens fronting Broughton Rd, and a green space for Broughton Primary School at the back frame the 3–4-storey structure. A widened St Mark's Path with segregated cycle lane would run past the main entrance.



Spartle backed the plans, albeit with reservations about so much unrelieved pink in the materials (bit.ly/3k6X9Ei). We were unprepared for the brattle of disagreement that followed. 'Ugly', 'school of Honecker or Ceausescu', 'Dniepropetrovsk 1958', 'hideous', 'portacabins', 'soul destroying' and 'prison block' were among the publishable terms relayed via social media. Some disliked the shared access platforms (balconies), others questioned the need for a built nursery at all, given that the adjacent park has alternative outdoor potential.

The discussion was briefly fast and furious. As we went to press, however, only seven people had formally objected and two supported. The deadline for comments is 5 March.

Government rethink on short-term-lets law

The Scottish Government last month temporarily withdrew legislation to regulate short-term lets, but promises to return with revised proposals in June if re-elected.

The intention had been to give local authorities until April 2022 to establish designated areas in which planning permission would be required before renting out property. STL hosts would then have until April 2023 to apply for a licence.

But critics of the scheme successfully argued that clearer guidance was needed to: support councils and operators; exclude bed-and-breakfasts from the new law; and protect the tourism sector, particularly small businesses in rural and island areas.

Among other matters, a steering group will now clarify: application of control areas; material change of use; criteria for deciding planning applications; duration of permissions; fit and proper hosts.

Grassroots campaigners at PLACE (Protecting Liveable, Affordable Communities) are worried that STL giants like Airbnb and Expedia are to be represented on the committee, and will have undue influence in trying to water down the new law's regulatory framework. PLACE is therefore requesting a place at the table for themselves and community councils so that residents' 'lived experience' can contribute to designing 'effective legislation free of loopholes' [bit.ly/3ugtj8].

Meanwhile, the original timetable for implementation still stands.

Ways to improve congested Broughton Street

After extensive consultation, New Town & Broughton Community Council has brought forward proposals for temporary improvements to Broughton St pending completion of the trams-to-Newhaven project and a wider review of traffic impacts in the area.

NTBCC says significant change is needed for the street to realise its potential as: a pedestrian, cycling, and transport route; a residential area; and a retail and leisure hub.

Suggestions for pedestrians include: increase footway widths, particularly on the east side; remove street clutter; improve footway surfaces; prioritise timings for pedestrians at crossings; reduce junction widths on side streets; modify London St roundabout to enhance pedestrian space and reflect desire lines.

Suggestions for cyclists include: new segregated lane on London St (hence no need for one on Broughton St); improve London St/Drummond Pl junction; repair and maintain road surface; additional cycle racks.

Suggestions for transport route include: relocate bus stops to widest footways; one lane only in each direction; consult local businesses on fewer loading bays and restricted hours of operation; remove long-term pay & display parking; traffic calming on downward lane; improve Picardy Pl gyratory; reduce parking capacity of the new St James Quarter; monitor speed and pollution to gauge future improvements.

NTBCC's report is a thoughtful and detailed response to Edinburgh Council's Spaces for People Programme. You can read it in full here [bit.ly/3atxRgk]. Nevertheless, it will be controversial among risk-averse local traders and determined drivers. Expect lively debate.



Council consults on Winter Festivals

Edinburgh Council is consulting with businesses, residents and community groups on the future of Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay after 2022.

Supporters of the events point to their popularity with 2.5M visitors in 2019. They say the Christmas event generated £113M for the city, and the Hogmanay one £39.2M.

Critics dispute these figures, and how much money stays in Edinburgh. They point to major disruption, the dislocation of residents from their own traditional celebrations, and question the wisdom of mass events given what we now know about pandemics. The deadline for comments is 19 May [bit.ly/3kfllyQ].

SEPA in deep trouble after cyber-attack

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency is the official body which reports pollution, forecasts floods, and issues warnings to individuals and businesses across the country. As such, it is important to those locals who live, work, play, or relax beside the Water of Leith (bit.ly/2P1ZuoB).

However, following a cyber-attack on 24 December, SEPA's efficacy has been severely compromised. Last month, *Spurtle* saw correspondence from a senior officer at the organisation detailing the current known extent of the problem. We think it's important that this gets a wider airing.

The attack was a sophisticated criminal attempt to extort public funds. SEPA has refused to cooperate with those responsible in order to regain access to nearly all its systems, including: contact centre, communications, internal systems, and processes. It is instead using expert help to restore email, staff schedules, some data products and reporting tools. Information submitted to SEPA since 24 December, including by email, is currently inaccessible and will remain so for some time. Meanwhile, the body's 1.2k staff are finding other ways to provide priority regulatory, monitoring, flood forecasting and warning services. Coupled with Brexit and the global pandemic, this is a challenge.

SEPA estimates that at least 4k files were stolen (1.2 GB), and some of these have since been illegally published online. (Others were already publicly available.) Those organisations and individuals likely to be affected by this data theft are being contacted as they are identified.

SEPA is issuing weekly statements on its service restoration, and, with the aid of Police Scotland and cyber-security experts, will focus in the months to come on 'eradication, remediation and recovery'.

For now, members of the public wishing to report serious environment impacts (such as pollution) can visit [www.sepa.org.uk/contact] or Tel. 0800 807060. For latest flood information visit [www.floodlinescotland.org.uk].



Céud míle fáilte, within reason

Hints calculated to prevent the Plague spreading from other countries into this kingdom.

Near to our several ports, there should be lazarettos built in convenient places, on little islands, if it can be, for the reception both of men and goods which arrive from places suspected of infection; the keeping men in quarantine on board the ship not being sufficient; the only use of which is, to observe whether any die among them.

For infection may be preserved so long in cloaths in which it is once lodged, that as much, nay more of it, if sickness continues in the ship, may be brought on shore at the end than at the beginning of forty days; unless a new quarantine be begun every time any person dies; which might not end but with the destruction of the whole ship's crew.

If there has been any contagious distemper in the ship, the sound men should leave their cloaths, which should be sunk in the sea, the men washed and shaved, and having fresh cloaths, should stay in the lazaretto thirty or forty days.

The reason of this is, because persons may be recovered from a disease themselves, and yet retain matter of infection about them a considerable time.—[*Extracted by AM from The Scots Magazine, 1 October 1770.*]



Law firm not averse to advertising

In 2018 the legal giant McEwan Fraser was refused retrospective permission for the intrusive signage it had added to its East Claremont St HQ (Issue 273). After an unsuccessful appeal to the Scottish Government, it removed the offending appendages.

In 2019, following two years' firm persuasion by CEC Enforcement, the firm next removed an unconsented semi-permanent advertisement hanging over a gable it owns at the end of West Annandale St (Issue 283).

Now, in a new twist that seems to combine both earlier problems, we learn that a second complaint has been raised with Enforcement. It concerns another semi-permanent advertisement (pictured), this time occupying one of the very areas on the firm's HQ which it was obliged to unclutter three years ago.

Perhaps the determined professionals at McEwan Fraser simply assume that where there's a will there's a way.



Briefly



Anecdotal evidence suggests a huge increase in the **number of dogs** since Lockdown began. And an accompanying increase in **footpath excrement**. Are we really seeing more dogs, or the same number of dogs walked more often by **more family members**? And are pavement poopers increasing, or are **inexperienced dog walkers just** less willing to pouch gifts from their pooches? **Your theories, please.**

The police box on **Canonmills Bridge** is available for pop-up or long-term rental. It is not suitable for **coffee/carry-out** use. To pitch your proposal, contact [edinburghcornercopia@gmail.com].

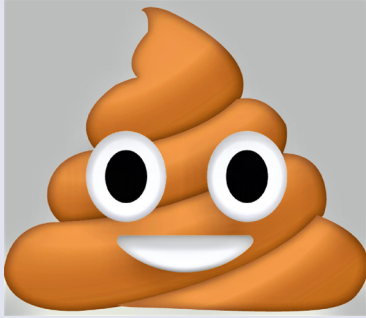


We thank Eveline Berenger for this photo of a new work underneath the bridge connecting **Tanfield to Glenogle Rd**. Is it, she enquires, by the **Mystery Mosaicist** whose creations *Spurtle* has often celebrated in the past? It is. Up to a point. The work – part of a virus-themed series – first appeared in **Aug last year**. And the Mystery Mosaicist is no more, having unmasked herself as none other than **Abbeymount-based artist Helen Miles** [bit.ly/2M8uiTj].

Sovereign Ct residents were alarmed in Feb by night-time prowlers. The police arrested one, who had been spotted **trying house doors** and opening car bonnets. Two others were later noticed lurking in shadows and peering through **ground-floor windows**. They ran when challenged. A third, dressed in black, was observed in the small hours checking out bin contents. Locals are bemused by the sudden spike in skulking.

Reports surfaced last month of a Covid outbreak among workers on the new **St James Quarter** building site. After 11 positive tests among staff, another **50 were sent home** to self-isolate. That such an outbreak should occur here will surprise no-one who has witnessed workers **failing to keep a safe distance** from each other at the gates or when visiting local shops. **Hand sanitising, mask wearing, and one-way systems** on-site are, according to staff who spoke to the media, little respected. The new centre is scheduled to open this spring.

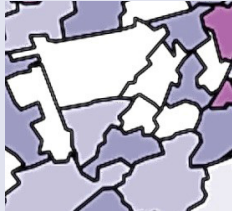
Moreover ...



An online petition to persuade Edinburgh Council to 'Pit googly eyes oan the jobby' had attracted 758 signatures by the time *Spurtle* went to press [bit.ly/3qCy7zg]. Its instigator, **Leith writer H.J. Giles** (@HarryJosieGiles), argues that 'If we hiv tae tak look at it [the **W Hotel**, aka 'The Golden Turd'], we should mak it mair entertainin.' If the suggestion were ever to come to a vote, it is not clear to us which councillors would support the motion.

Pedestrians visiting the Water of Leith beside **Redbraes** this winter have appreciated the **new drain** in the tunnel under the railway line. That **malodorous dark pool**, that **wobble** across planks, that moment when the **brick tipped** and your shoe entered the depths are now only distant memories.

Public Health Scotland publishes weekly statistics for granular **Intermediate Zones**. Based on people tested between 12 and 18 Feb, the numbers of new positive **Covid-19 cases** in 7 Spurtleshire neighbourhoods were as follows (equivalent rate per 100k in brackets): Broughton North & Powderhall, 5 (114.7); Broughton South, 4 (82.1); Canonmills & New Town North, 0-2; Inverleith Goldenacre & Warriston, 4 (102.6); New Town East & Gayfield, 0-2; Pilrig, 3 (83.9); Stockbridge, 0-2. The figures across all of Edinburgh were 438 (83.4); across all of Scotland 5.7k (104.3). For further details, see [tabsoft.co/2MfyAbG].



During the current Lockdown, printed *Spurtles* are available at: Bellevue Convenience Store (**Bellevue Rd**); Broughton St (various outlets, including Real Foods); Canonmills Newsagents (**Howard St**); Claretoun Food & Wine (**E Claremont St**); **Hopetoun Cres Gdns** (central gate); Leopold Pl Newsagent; London St Grocery; **Queen St East Gdns** (central railings); Scotland St Library (railings outside No. 37); Spey Ter Newsagents; Tattie Shaws (**Elm Row**); Weigh to Go (**Crichton Pl**). *E-Spurtles* are available in Yorkshire and downloadable from [bit.ly/2NNBvBY].

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Stopping the spread starts with all of us.



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SELF-ISOLATE



LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

A forum for local people who want to engage with and work for their local community.



Leith Central Community Council

Participate in local democracy.

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Next meeting: to be confirmed. For local information, visit the website at

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>



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COVID-19/Coronavirus Update:

Because of Coronavirus/Covid-19, and in accordance with the law and advice, my office is closed to the public until further notice. My team and I are working remotely and continue to assist constituents as normal.

Weekly Virtual/Phone Surgeries:

I have also had to cancel my weekly face-to-face advice surgeries. I will be holding telephone or electronic surgeries on Friday's. Please leave a voicemail or email my office to book a 15 minute surgery slot and someone in my team will get in touch to confirm a time.

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December 2020



NEW TOWN & BROUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Representing locals' views to City of Edinburgh Council.

Tell us what you think and make a difference.

Next meeting: to be confirmed.

Contact us at

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