

Spurtle



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Tel: 07455 770474

spurtle@hotmail.co.uk

BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

BIN A LONG TIME COMING

A report to the Transport & Environment Cmte last month laid out general principles about how and when landfill/mixed recycling/glass/food-waste bin hubs will be arranged across the city [bit.ly/3v3Asvi]. More bins clustered in fewer locations are intended to improve availability, declutter streets, and make collections easier. The project cost is forecast at £5.7M.

The end of gull-proof bags

Officials say only 25% of people use their gull-proof bags, and red/blue recycling boxes are similarly unpopular and too small. Most people use nearby communal bins instead, which leads to overfilling and spillage. The report says GPBs and boxes are 'not fit for purpose from customer service, route efficiency, and health and safety perspectives', and should be scrapped. In the World Heritage Site, 'special care' will be taken to replace them with (as few as possible) safely and sensitively positioned communal bins.

New Town & Broughton Community Council, Edinburgh World Heritage and the Cockburn Association objected to not being consulted as had been promised. They pushed T&E for the decision to be deferred for a month until proper engagement had taken place. A senior official apologised for the oversight, and agreed that a pause was possible. But Coalition councillors voted to press ahead as planned so as not to disrupt/delay other desirable changes elsewhere in the city. Some engagement with New Towners will take place belatedly, but residents have essentially been bypassed and there is no guarantee their concerns will be acted upon.

Timing and Covid effects

Changes will be introduced in phases, with areas in Controlled Parking Zones taking longer in order for Traffic Regulation Orders to be processed. In Greater Spurtleshire the provisional timetable is: Pilrig, Leith Walk, Leith, North Leith, Bonnington, West Leith (Apr-Sep 2021); Hillside, Broughton, Inverleith (from Jan 2022); New Town, Stockbridge, Canonmills (from spring 2022).

Covid has already delayed the project's start, and another issue has been the Lockdown-related increase in home-working and home deliveries. These changes have diverted food and packaging from commercial to domestic 'waste streams' and are being kept under review.



MOODS IN VIEW



This striking bronze *Head of a Woman*, raised on a slate base, was estimated to fetch between £600 and £800 in Lyon & Turnbull's 'Design since 1860' auction last month. Strangely, her expression varies between impassive calm and affectionate amusement depending on your mood and the angle from which you view her. The work is by Marcelle Quinton (1929–2017), a Berlin-born artist who, as a girl, fled the Nazis for the USA before studying at Oxford and eventually settling in Britain.

SHORT-TERM LETS REFUSED FOR LONDON STREET

Applications to convert two properties at 37a and 39 London St into short-term lets have been refused (20/05425/FUL, 20/05421/FUL).

The case was complicated by disputed ownership of, and access rights to, the rear garden at 37a. However, ownership of the garden was not a material consideration.

Objectors said visitors would spill into the garden, creating a nuisance for over 100 neighbours. To address neighbours' concerns, the applicant had later: (a) amended plans so that they no longer showed a potential sitting-out area; (b) changed a specification for patio doors to include fire doors instead. House rules would ban visitors from using the garden, but could not be practically enforced under a Council condition.

Councillors on the Development Management Subcommittee agreed that visitors would use the garden whether or not they were supposed to. They suspected smokers would also use areas to the front of the properties. They therefore unanimously refused consent on the grounds of negative impact on amenity in contravention of LDP Policy Hou 7 (inappropriate uses in residential areas).

Spurtle welcomes this decision. Short-term lets have more potential to weaken and disrupt communities than to strengthen them.

CONCERNS OVER CUMBERLAND BAR BEER GARDEN

Local opinion is split over additional outdoor tables and seating for the Cumberland Bar.

The area behind Dundonald St is accessed via steep steps down from SE Cumberland St Lane. It was formerly used by the bar for storage, but has been emptied and smartened up to accommodate the extra furniture. The Cumberland has applied for occasional licences to operate externally between 11am and 10pm from 26 April to 6 June.

Some neighbouring residents are worried about potential disturbance from patrons using this echoey space, especially since so many locals are now obliged to work and study from home. They also fear occasional licences may eventually give way to permanent ones, with a consequent loss of amenity.

Those concerned approached the Drummond Civic Association, New Town & Broughton Community Council, and Cllr Joanna Mowat for help. Licensing had not reached a decision by the time *Spurtle* went to press.

Not all locals oppose the Cumberland's initiative. Some welcome it as potential customers seeking safely distanced opportunities to socialise. Others regard it as a short-term and law-abiding business response to difficult Covid times.

The last time tensions surfaced between the bar and neighbours was in 2014, when the Cumberland eventually withdrew its application to extend outdoor drinking hours until 10pm year-round (Issues 235–36).



Briefly



A banner slung for months from the façade of **150 East Claremont St** has been removed. As detailed in Issue 304, a member of the public reported legal firm **McEwan Fraser** to Council Enforcement officials in February, claiming its ‘**temporary advertisement**’ had been in place too long and was in breach of planning regulations. *Spurtle* does not know the outcome of that case, nor whether **removal of the banner** was in any way connected.

An application to demolish the unstable 1.2m parapet wall at **10–14 Waterloo Pl** (21/01393/LBC) has been withdrawn. Proprietors are leaning towards an **alternative solution** for the listed structure. Archibald Elliot’s 1819 **Greek Revival design** features at [bit.ly/3m4foeh].

The **Royal Botanic Garden** will extend display of its inflatable monkey outside **Inverleith House** until the end of May. *Spurtle* has examined it repeatedly from the front, and **now can hardly wait** to see the back of it.

Tearing of teeth and gnashing of hair greeted the **London St Grocery’s** closure after 53 years’ service last month [bit.ly/2QdadgT]. A new sign on the premises now proclaims the start of a ‘continuation’ business. **Capital Wholesalers** will apparently deliver the finest ingredients to your door next day. See [bit.ly/32zugZd].

Jewson Ltd – the timber and building material distributor on **Eyre Pl** – is to close. A spokesperson tells us the company was unable to secure a **renewal of its lease** with the landlord. Staff will be relocated to nearby branches such as **Craigentiny Ave** and **Ratcliffe Ter**.

Councillors last month agreed to site an 8ft-high advertising drum at the junction of **Brunswick St and Leith Walk**. It will not adversely affect a nearby tree, nor be to the detriment of road/pedestrian safety and the amenity of the area. Apparently.

The Council has provided a conglomeration of proposed Traffic Regulation Orders for the smooth operation of trams between **Broughton and Newhaven** [bit.ly/3x9S6ZJ]. They are available for public consultation, objection, and comment **until 11 May**. Be warned: repeated street names and innumerable bans on left, right, and U-turns make for less than riveting reading. Be grateful: **Leith Central CC and New Town & Broughton CC** are paying close attention.

G-G-G-Good grief, it’s huge!

Hutchinson 3G UK Ltd wants to install a 15m streetpole and 3 cabinets in Gayfield Pl (20/01642/PA).

The company says it’s committed to providing improved network coverage and capacity, most notably in relation to 5G services. The signal from this mast will service a coverage hole of 50m.

‘In these unprecedented times of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is recognised that high-speed mobile connectivity is the lifeblood of a Community; facilitating educational benefits, providing access to vital services, improving communications with the associated commercial benefits for local businesses, enabling e-commerce and working from home, as well as enjoying access to social media and gaming for leisure time activities.’

An even bigger mast was planned at first, but the height was reduced to lessen the effect on visual amenity. At 15m, ‘This is therefore no taller than one of the trees in close proximity. We also note the other elements here with a vertical emphasis: lampposts; traffic signages; and the tenement-style flats.

‘We therefore do not consider that the proposed new mast will have a significant and demonstrable detrimental impact upon the conservation area.’ Aye, right.

Spaces for People – some good but consultation full of flaws

NTBCC approves some elements of officials’ specific proposals for Broughton, such as extended cycle segregation from Bellevue to Canonmills and the retention of a loading bay outside Real Foods, but has described the dearth of footway widening on Broughton St as a ‘major disappointment’. Nobody’s impressed by the very limited stretch of cycle lane on the uphill route between Broughton Pl and Forth St.

NTBCC welcomes removal of railings, widening pavements, and road narrowing at the Mansfield Pl roundabout. But it says loss of one traffic lane at the junction of Canonmills and Broughton Rd, and an end to right turns into Eyre Pl, may lead to tailbacks. It favours the wider footways here, which it says will improve safety. All changes are expected to be implemented this month. For maps see [bit.ly/3tFJGal].

Some locals blame the lack of more radical changes on an official mindset that continues to prioritise motor traffic; others blame Sustrans for a lack of local knowledge. Proposals will be reviewed by the Transport & Environment Cmte in June.

Flawed consultation

Meanwhile, the Council’s Spaces for People consultation on making temporary road changes permanent was greeted by New Town & Broughton Community Council with a long list of criticisms [bit.ly/3tVX1qR].

It panned questions about as yet unimplemented proposals which can’t be assessed, and said the separate needs of pedestrians and cyclists should not be lumped together as if they are the same.

Simple yes/no answers could not allow for detailed or nuanced replies, and would be of little help in guiding future decisions by officials and councillors.

NTBCC suggested that using the Commonplace Mapping tool would have been better at gaining genuine and considered feedback. ‘Edinburgh Council and its citizens deserve better than this hastily prepared and poorly designed survey.’

On specific local issues, NTBCC mostly favoured continuing with current changes to the Mound and Princes St East. It advised abandoning the Waverley Bridge closure and removing the cycle lane on London Rd. Changes from Broughton St to Canonmills should not be made permanent until they have been assessed in action. NTBCC feared the impact on its area of traffic displaced by planned restrictions on South Bridge and tramworks-related closure of Broughton St. Increased traffic levels on E London St, particularly buses, are already an ‘intolerable nuisance’ for residents and St Mary’s Primary School.

Picardy Place island plans still all at sea

New traffic modelling around Picardy Pl has been started to take account of changed conditions. Opening of the new St James Quarter this summer, tramworks/new tramstop, and post-Lockdown revival of the city’s economy will all be factored in.

Meanwhile, local stakeholders are being invited to contribute to establishing general principles for use of the central reservation.

What first appeared as broad sunlit acres here look much less roomy when one considers the variety of tram and bus passengers, wandering pedestrians, cyclists, and wheelers who will share or compete for space.

Picardy Village Association and New Town & Broughton Community Council want local residents’ voices to be heard in the discussion. They are keen to participate, but are also sceptical about Council officials’ ability to frame impartial and effective consultations, or to posit options which are both attractive and feasible.

Other observers doubt how much local aspirations will genuinely affect the outcome. They suspect traffic and transport imperatives will trump all other considerations.



More debate than Battle of Hustings

The *Spurtle* Zoom hustings for Edinburgh Northern & Leith on 20 April pitted 6 candidates against each other, 27 questions, and a ‘Fawlty Towers-style reception bell’ dinging them after 90 seconds.

It had all the ingredients for a virtual henhouse-through-the-woodchipper scenario. Instead, we got 90 minutes of orderly, cogent, and mostly polite debate. Details here [bit.ly/3eqQouv].

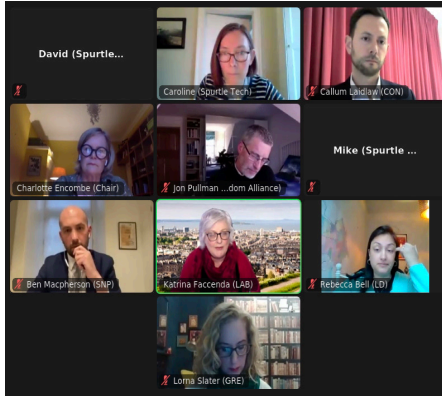
All candidates stressed longstanding residence in, or undying love for, the constituency. Laidlaw claimed he was so attached that crossing southwards across Princes St made him ‘feel funny’.

Macpherson emphasised his experience as an MSP and minister, pulling numerous statistical/numerical rabbits from his hat. Rivals responded that they weren’t real rabbits or, if they were, they had been wrongfully put in and extracted.

Faccenda suggested Macpherson was more interested in his career than in locals, and that some ‘entitled’ female politicians should pay greater attention to unentitled female voters. Surprisingly, she didn’t target Conservatives.

Laidlaw defended the Union and blamed the SNP for withholding funds from councils. Bell was at her strongest on Health and the impact on it of inequality. Pullman detected dark forces masquerading as medical experts to quash civil liberties. Slater pointed to ‘a ton of stuff’ in the Greens’ manifesto, said economic growth and environmental responsibility weren’t inconsistent, and urged listeners to ‘Vote like your future depends on it!’

The virtual format limited opportunities for verbal fisticuffs. There were few wounding blows thrown and no bloody noses afterwards. Reasonable and civilised, the event was enjoyable nonetheless.—*Jaundiced of Claremont*



Briefly



Local author Kirsti Wishart’s novel *The Knitting Station* has recently been published by Rymour Books [bit.ly/3cXsZ4h]. It’s an everyday tale of **island life**, counter-espionage, experimental psychology, Russian invasion, **technicolour Highlanders**, mushroom-induced hallucinations, a **psychotic sheep**, and knitwear. ISBN: 9781838405205.

Thistle-Peat Ltd plans to demolish a warehouse and replace it with 34, car-free, 1–3-bedroom flats at **25–27 Arthur St** (21/00991/FUL). The proposals have met **considerable opposition** from locals for reasons including: loss of studio spaces, unaffordability of the ‘affordable’ housing, fears of overshadowing, loss of privacy for neighbours, and incongruous roof design. Admirers of **Rhubaba Gallery and Studios** – soon to be displaced – observed that developers praise Leith for its artistic vibe, but then price artists out of the area. A spokesperson for Thistle-Peat said it was a small company without resources to relocate **artists and practitioners** in alternative premises.

As the name suggests, **Springfield St** is blessed with abundant groundwater. So much so, indeed, that the old **Alhambra Cinema** (demolished in 1974 and now replaced by Majestic Wines) pumped water from its **basement sump** 24 hours a day in order to stay dry. An early 19th-century drain from here to the **Foot of the Walk** also helped manage the problem, until its removal during **recent tramworks**. What, wonder locals, could possibly go wrong?

Drummond Community High School is advertising for a new head teacher. The successful applicant, with a salary of £69,669, will lead **413 students** and **63 staff** in an institution ‘Nurturing Big Ambitions, underpinned by CORE values of Commitment, Opportunity, Respect and Equity’. In Aug, current head **Jodie Hannan** will become the first female head of **Musselburgh Grammar School** in nearly 500 years.

After our last issue went to press in late March, another 3 constituency candidates were announced for **Edinburgh Central** in the Scottish Parliament Elections. They are: **Bonnie Prince Bob** (Independent), **Tam Laird** (Scottish Libertarian Party), and **Donald Mackay** (UK Independence Party). **Jon Pullman** (Freedom Alliance) joins 5 other candidates in **Edinburgh Northern & Leith**.

Striking local has career goals

Spurtleshire is not bereft of blue plaques around doorways. But who among the living might merit future emblazoning? Why not a lauded exponent of the ‘beautiful game’?

Stuart Armstrong, a gentleman of becoming modesty, now lives in our area when time away from football allows. Currently, he is a vital component of Southampton FC in the English Premier League, which he joined in 2018 as an attacking midfielder.

Prior to that, from 2010, his professional career was at Dundee Utd and Celtic. Most notably, he made 98 appearances for Celtic and was an integral part of its astonishing 4 Scottish league championships and consecutive domestic trebles.

Armstrong’s first full international appearance came in 2017, a performance team manager Gordon Strachan called ‘the best Scotland debut I have ever seen’. He remains part of the team going to Euro 2021 at Wembley this summer, and hopes to play his part against England on 18 June.

Of his chosen sport, this sterling Highlander (he was born in Inverness, and is also a law graduate) has said, ‘We aim for the clouds, and, hopefully, we produce the performances to match’. Assuredly, Mr Armstrong is an artist in his own right. We salute him and, *deo volente*, his clinching glory goal on 18 June!—*JRM*.



Image: Wikimedia, Creative Commons.

Playhouse drama may run and run

Ambassador Theatre Group will replace its recently demolished scene dock on the NE side of the Playhouse Theatre with an improved one to provide set storage space, quick change, wing room, and a ‘secondary get-in’ for deliveries, scenery and personnel (21/00722/LBC).

Hoskins Architects says the exterior use of reflective sinusoidal aluminium sheet ‘completely without openings or penetrations ... takes on a veil or curtain-like quality’. The use of ‘more industrial materials handled with an extreme simplicity and refined proportions ... elevates them beyond the everyday.’ No it doesn’t. It looks like a corrugated barn.

Beware: this may well be just the opening act of a longer planning drama. The cladding has been designed for easy removal, whilst the foundations and steel frame are capable of supporting up to 4 more storeys of ‘accommodation’.

ATG makes no secret of future ambitions for this Greenside backwater. We must be careful they don’t end up blighting the area for local residents or ruining views from Calton Hill.

Moreover ...



Congratulations to **Anwar and Ruby**, who this month celebrate 20 years of serving the community at Canonmills Newsagents on **Howard St**. 'Over that time we have built **lasting friendships and memories** with our customers, and now consider this our second home. We'd like to **thank the community** for being so welcoming and supporting us throughout.'

The Small Spirits Company has opened a drinks shop for discerning palates at **6 Brandon Ter** (formerly home to Wooden Toys Edinburgh). Wines will include top-quality **alcohol-free** products, a personal passion of founder Graeme Sutherland. 'Just because you **choose not to drink booze**, does not mean life can't be exciting.' Quite right, as anyone who has ever sat in a bath full of **Babycham Sparkling Perry** will readily agree.

Vehicle **parked badly** on yellow lines, bus stop, or parking bay? Report it asap to [bit.ly/3frPMH3]. **Parked on a footway?** Tel. 101.

Bakery Andante will open a café soon at **49 Broughton St** (formerly Essential Therapy above Villeneuve Wines). Breakfasts, brunches, light lunches, coffee, and cake will feature, as will the 10-year-old Morningside independent's **renowned artisan breads**.

Tesco Broughton Rd seeks retrospective planning permission for **refrigeration plant** installed in its service yard at the beginning of Mar (20/01675/FUL). With **sound levels** at 10m of 45 dB (day) and 40 dB (night), we wonder whether neighbours have anything to say.

Dr Peter Matthews, senior lecturer in social policy at Stirling University and **Leither turned Pilton resident**, last month wrote a provocative blog on the inequities of **Spaces for People**. In short, he argues the Council is insufficiently caring, thoughtful, and proactive to provide safe spaces for pedestrians in **poorer areas**. See what you think here [bit.ly/3wJ6JdD].

CORRECTION: Trading hours for Archipelago Provisions at **23c Dundas St** are Mon-Sun, 10am-4pm.

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

Post: Spurtle, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ.
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A forum for local people who want to engage with and work for their local community.

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NEW TOWN &
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to City of Edinburgh Council.

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Next meeting:
Monday 10 May on Zoom.

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