

# Spurtle



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**August  
2021**

**No 309**

**Tel: 07455 770474**

**spurtle@hotmail.co.uk**

**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free**

## MOP LOCAL, MOBILISE GLOBALLY

Intense thunder-plunges caused localised flooding across Edinburgh on 4 July, including parts of the St James Qtr, Raeburn Pl, Logan St, and Canonmills.

At one point, 37mm of rain fell in less than an hour, about 50% of the normal quantity expected here across the whole month. (Some sources claimed 66%.)



The Canon Court ApartHotel and Napier Bathrooms were inundated for the second time in under a year. The latter only reopened its Canonmills showroom in June after months of drying-out and refurbishment. 'It's a nightmare,' Napier's Johnny Bacigalupo told us. 'We're thinking of buying Venice-style flood barriers for the building so we can protect our business going forward. Like our neighbours, we risk having no insurance offered due to the failing infrastructure of the City.' Matt Hansen next door even talks of seeking legal redress.

### Wrong kind of rain

Councillor Macinnes, Transport & Environment Convener, argues Canonmills gullies were not blocked on this occasion (others disagree). Rather, no UK city's infrastructure has yet been designed for such sudden torrents and associated surcharge of sewers.

She says officials are actively working to identify high-risk areas and assess mitigation measures. But that sounds like too little too late to businesses and households facing tens of thousands of pounds' worth of damage right now.

### Soggy outlook

One problem is that, as *Spurtle* detailed in depth 2 years ago, climate-change-related flooding – which also threatens properties bordering the Water of Leith – has been acknowledged by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency but is downplayed by Council officials and politicians [[bit.ly/3ApU4Xs](http://bit.ly/3ApU4Xs)].

Another problem is that Edinburgh's Vision for Water Management does not – cannot – offer quick fixes [[bit.ly/3Awwb0v](http://bit.ly/3Awwb0v)]. Effective solutions will take decades to implement and cost eye-watering multiple millions.

A third problem is that we are not addressing a fixed and quantifiable challenge. Edinburgh floods may well get worse before we begin to tackle them, and then continue to confound us even after we think we've finished. See 'Moreover...', p.4.

## LOOK, NO BRAKES!



Take your pick: short-term lets; unexams; floods; blocked drains; heatwaves; hooliganism; not enough experts; too many experts; pandemics, short Covid, long Covid, new Covid, tourists with tickles, pingdemonium; bin identity; consultation collapse; tree loss; hair loss; bills; planning fiascos; finding a home; keeping a home; scooters on footpaths; hell, handcarts, and general direction of travel. The modest item of street-art shown above appears outside Ocean Terminal. We feel it captures the prevailing mood.

## OLD ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL GOES ON OPEN MARKET

As reported in Issue 303 [[bit.ly/3yv05f](http://bit.ly/3yv05f)], the Council's Finance & Resources Cmte has decided to invite development proposals for the old Royal High School on Regent Rd. That process has now started [[bit.ly/3yzaFqi](http://bit.ly/3yzaFqi)].

A 125-year ground lease on the building is up for grabs, with a nominal rent in return for an unspecified initial premium. However, the Council does not bind itself to accept the highest offer.

### Points to ponder

If you fancy having a go, you should include on the back of your envelope details about: proposed use (including layout drawings and schematics); how you'll deliver a long-term sustainable use for the property; how your proposal matches the Council's Planning Statement and Scottish Ministers' Inquiry conclusions; information on public access; how much you'll pay; proof you've got the money; timescale; and 'conditionality'.

### How it's judged

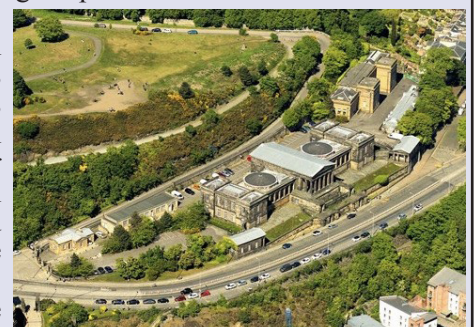
The Council is vague about any deadline for submissions – some reckon it may be as early as this month. Thereafter a panel of senior Council Officers with representation from Estates, Economic Development and Legal Services will assess proposals, weighting each according to: adherence to planning brief (50%); public benefit (35%); bid (15%). A

recommendation for approval will then be presented to the Finance & Resources Cmte, perhaps in Oct.

### Expensive failure

In other news, Calton Hill Hotel General Partner Ltd (a special purpose vehicle set up by developers trying to turn the building into a 6-star hotel) will be struck off the Register of Companies and dissolved in September. Accounts filed for the year ending 31 March 2021, show it spent £5M+ on the public Inquiry, a sum loaned by a partner firm – OCM Luxembourg Edinburgh ApartHotel – which will now be written off.

Have Duddingston House Properties and Urbanist Hotels now lost interest in hotel plans here, or will they return with fresh proposals and new partners? We watch with interest. Meanwhile, a source tells *Spurtle* that carefully adjusted plans for St Mary's Music School are ready for submission.



# Briefly



In late June, responding to accidental demolition of a parapet wall on the **Warriston Rd** bridge by **St Mark's Park**, one Twitter wit remarked drily, 'Bloody cyclists.' Through-traffic for motor vehicles had not long resumed here after restrictions aimed at **improving safety** for pedestrians and active travellers were lifted. The coping stones have since been reinstated.

Planning permission is sought to reconvert 1st-floor offices at Category B-listed **24 Dublin St** into a 3-bedroom flat (21/03454/LBC).

Those who applied to convert **37a and 39 London St** into short-term lets [bit.ly/3eQXUQ6] have appealed to the Scottish Govt against the Council's refusal of consent (PPA-230-2346; PPA-230-2345). See [bit.ly/3eRIBbd] for details.

**Edinburgh World Heritage** says proposed communal bin hubs threaten the New Town's 'visual integrity' [bit.ly/3hTRQZ7]. In a new statement issued after it was **not consulted** by the Council in Apr [bit.ly/3xWjHh4], EWH urges **street-specific solutions** and flexibility over spacing. It pointedly recommends securing **community consent for changes**, and favours underground waste storage in future. See 'The city dust' (p. 3).

In Aug last year we reported Edinburgh Dog & Cat Home's departure from **13A Raeburn Pl**. We can now report happier news, with the arrival here this month of **Rare Bird Book Shop**. It's a physical extension of the online book subscription club [bit.ly/3hOknzz], and will feature up to **3k titles by women writers**. Events and meet-ups will follow.

From **@EyeEdinburgh** in conversation with **@oculusaye** and **@thespurtle** on Twitter last month, a **diverting aside**: 'I don't like William Cobbett. He is joyless on teas, and on bread-making, has the patronising and unsound attitude of a man who has never made bread himself, but is sure it can't be difficult, look how many women do it regularly.'

Loulabelles Beauty has flit **40 Rodney St** for the bright lights of Kirkliston.

Consent has been granted to subdivide the B-listed piano shop at **4-5 Summer Pl** and form a self-contained, south-facing 2-bedroom flat over 2 levels (21/01286/LBC). Originally **Summer's Pl**, named after its developer, the tenement was built in the 1820s as residential. A smaller retail unit, with much later **Edwardian bay-windows** facing the road, will continue at the front of the building.

## 25% Social housing for Ediston development

As expected, Ediston has brought forward fresh plans for the New Town Quarter between Dundas St and King George V Park (21/03481/FUL).

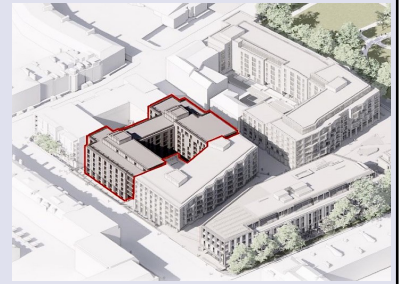
Plot 1, facing Dundas St and Eyre Ter, was previously consented as a hotel. It is now proposed as 108 affordable-rent residential units of 1-3 bedrooms with ground-floor commercial uses and associated landscaping/infrastructure.

This allocation matches the Edinburgh Local Development Plan requirement to provide 25% social housing in new developments of 12 or more units. We welcome that. We're less sure about lumping all such tenants in one location rather than peppering them across the site.

'Affordable' in this context means within reach of people earning less than the average Edinburgh annual income of £44k, guaranteed by a Section 75 Legal Agreement for at least 25 years.

It is not yet clear who would buy and manage these rentals, if approved, but all tenants are promised access to the same communal facilities, open spaces, and local amenities as homeowners.

Unflattering architectural visualisations – reminiscent of a de Chirico street minus the charm – are available at [bit.ly/3jM3SVP]. We hope the completed reality would be less barren and more appealing. A determination is expected by late Oct.



## Anent the St Jimmy

Just by entering the new St James Qtr, visitors consent to 'release, publication, and reproduction' of their voice and image in **film and photography**. So claim almost unnoticeable signs at the entrances. See [bit.ly/3y4bbft].

The Retties website shows an indicative 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom, 106 m<sup>2</sup> apartment here on offer at £380k+ [bit.ly/2UpwtGi]. The 152 flats in the **New Eidyn** development (due to complete in Q3 next year) occupy the 5th to 8th floors and will include Leicht kitchens, Siemens appliances, and private 'sky-gardens'. Some will command prices of £1.06M+. The original Eidyn was a region centred around today's Castle Rock in sub-Roman Britain between the 5th and 7th centuries. It too featured state-of-the-art sanitaryware as standard.

As noted in Issue 303, the Picardy Pl branch of **Bank of Scotland** closed in Apr. A new branch, offering a reduced range of services, has opened on Level 0. Useful, nonetheless.

Mixed news from **Multrees Wlk**. Nos 16, 18, 20, and 21 are empty after Boots and Pandora moved to the StJQ, Castle Art moved to No. 12, and Pen closed. Canada Goose is expected to occupy vacant Nos 8 and 9 in the autumn.



The original **foundation plaque** of 1770 has moved from the bus stop on Leith St to behind reinforced glass at the north end of today's St James Sq. Styles change over time, and the modern tribute-copy at the south end omits the 's'.

An **interpretative historical board** next to the plaque gives a short history of the site, beginning with the tenemental square begun in 1770 (controversially, between one and two storeys higher than the adjacent New Town). It concludes by mentioning New St Andrew House, completed in 1973: 'Disliked by many of the citizens of Edinburgh for its overbearing scale and the harmful effect on the skyline of the city, it was demolished in 2017.' The W Hotel rises immediately opposite [bit.ly/36Jw5F6].

Is your family vexed by whether 'St James' here refers to St James 'the Less' (half-brother of Christ) or St James 'the Greater' (son of Zebedee and Salome)? If so, relax. Stuart Harris, in **The Place Names of Edinburgh** (1996), suggests the original developers of the site were fervent Jacobites, and named it in covert honour of the Old Pretender, James Francis Edward Stuart. (Little) King St was a succinct nod to the latter's son, Charles Edward Louis John Casimir Sylvester Severino Maria.

## The frost and the furious

‘A funny, furious womanifesto.’ ‘A wickedly funny polemical collection.’ So ran two recent press headlines (in the *Observer* and *Guardian*, respectively) on *Things Are Against Us*, the latest work by local resident and acclaimed author Lucy Ellmann [bit.ly/3zfG51A].

In this wide-ranging, often coruscating ‘complaint’ of 14 essays, she turns her withering gaze upon aspects of popular culture, including racist stereotypes, the beauty industry, patriarchy, ecotourism, crime writing, and the disempowerment of women. She even disentangles cloying webs at the heart of *The Little House on the Prairie* and Hitchcock’s *Spellbound* in two of her most elegant pieces.

The collection has already been compared to Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas*—seminal works in feminist literature and thought. But Ellmann’s range is wider, and her work positively rollicks along with a leavening humour which is both wintry and exhilarating.

Her verve and style match those of the tribe of fox cubs she observed from her Broughton back window in a recent *Observer* ‘featurette’ (11.07.2021): ‘[They] play and romp and snap and chase and roll and wrestle and chomp leaves and study trash and squeeze through tight spots and make strange sounds, all in pursuit of their own impeccable agendas.’ Lucy Ellman – we salute you!—*JRM* (Galley Beggar Press, £9.99. pp. 170, ISBN 9781913111137)

LUCY ELLMANN

THINGS ARE  
AGAINST US



## When the sun has left the sky

*New (old-fashioned) lampposts began to be installed along Scotland St last month. Local resident Leslie Hills sheds some light.*

Between 1820 and 1860, six Scotland St houses had basic railing-mounted oil lamps. In 1860, gas standard lamps replaced them. After that it was downhill all the way.

In 2008, I joined in the persistent efforts of David Price *et al.*, which had resulted in agreement by the Council and Edinburgh World Heritage that railing-mounted lamps, as in Drummond Place, would be installed.

By early 2018, I had several email strings with officials, the longest containing 51 messages. Scotland Street currently had four different designs of elderly lights, each tatty and in disrepair.

Finally, in May 2018, David being away, Sandra Purves and I met with the Council and Edinburgh World Heritage. No uniform scheme had existed across Edinburgh, and streets had successive designs, so identifying an authentic plan for Scotland Street was difficult. Eventually, we settled on the 1860s scheme of standard lamps.

A replica globe was manufactured from an original owned by Sandra. Surveys were complicated, and cast-iron manufacture slow, but we were promised completion by mid-2019. Further problems shifted the start to March 2020 when holes for the standards were dug – then filled in again as the city went into lockdown.

By spring 2021, the Council’s Alan Simpson, who has been stalwart, reported yet another manufacturing delay. But in July, work finally began. The energy-efficient lamps will be centrally controlled and over 50% cheaper to run. A far cry from those original six oil lamps.—*Leslie Hills*

## The city dust: to the Editor

Sir,—Surely it can be no great inconvenience to avoid the disgusting sights which one is now beginning to see on the Saturday evenings of heaps of ashes, garbage, &c., lying before one-half of the houses in the New Town.

According to the present system, we are ordered to send out our rubbish at certain hours; a tidy servant, brings out her bucket and puts it on the street; but her back is scarcely turned before it is upset, and surrounded by half-a-dozen cinder-gatherers.

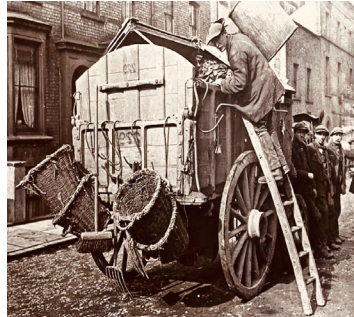
The fault lies not so much with the inhabitants as in a system which authorises them to throw everything they want to get quit of into the public street. To some extent the nuisance might easily be remedied. By far the greater proportion of the houses in the New Town have dust cellars below the area stair; let the Commissioners issue an order prohibiting all families who have these cellars against putting out their ashes at all, morning or night, and let an arrangement be made by which the dustmen can empty these cellars twice or thrice a-week.

Surely some system might be adopted gradually, by insisting upon the erection of dust bins or otherwise, by which the deposit of rubbish in the streets would be altogether prohibited.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient servant.

A HOUSEHOLDER.

*This letter of 26 April 1856 first appeared in the Edinburgh Evening Courant. Along with another, we reproduce it in full on our website (1.8.21).—AM*



## Briefly

Steeplejacks working on the tower of **Broughton St Mary’s Parish Church** say a further £85k worth of work is needed. Despite this coming at a time of serious financial difficulty for the Church of Scotland, the **Kirk Session** expects to receive a loan from the **General Trustees**, repayable over 5 years. In other news, the deadline for applications to become St Mary’s **new minister** passed on 5 July.

**AGD Six Ltd** is merging separate restaurants at Units 3 and 4 in the **Omni Centre** to form one restaurant/bar. Somehow, the **Boom Battle Bar** will include 2 pool tables and a 9-hole mini-golf course. Also: **2 beer pong tables** (a game for 4 people requiring accuracy, hand-eye coordination, and up to 10 cups of drinkable liquid); **2 shuffleboards** (shove ha’penny for people who can just about stand up); **3 dart booths** (fun ways to lose an eye with pals); and **2 axe lanes** (Viking darts for folk who don’t suffer friends). **Fun and games guaranteed.**

In May, a householder sought permission to add an **Admiral Boom-style** roof terrace and conservatory to **1A Dublin St Lane** [bit.ly/3kvEgwX]. Following 10 objections (including one from the **Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland**), those plans have been withdrawn.



On 6 July, *Spurtle* noted a shortage of fruit & veg at **Tesco Broughton Rd**, and on Twitter repeated an unauthorised insider’s explanation concerning self-isolating staff in the supply chain and a Brexit-related absence of **HGV drivers**. Readers reported similar gaps at other Edinburgh supermarkets, but no problems in the **Logie Green Rd Lidl** or **Elm Row Tattie Shaw’s**. Other Edinburgh and national media repeated the story later. From a **different perspective**, *Spurtle* follower @morrison0784 responded: ‘Murrayfield Sainsburys had no Red Leg rum or Regal Filter. Had to buy Havana 3 yr old and Sterling Red. Sort it oot Boris.’

Officials have **refused planning permission** to convert a ground- and basement-floor house at **25 E London St** into two separate 2-bedroom flats (21/02509/FUL). The **Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland** objected to the plans, which included replacing coal cellars at the front with a **new steel-framed structure**, and creating a larger window at the back. Officials ruled that the proposals would not preserve the Conservation Area’s **special character or appearance**. Ramsay’s B&B here appeared in a 2012 episode of C4’s reality-TV show **Four in a Bed** (Issue 209).

# Moreover ...

Edinburgh World Heritage assembled a panel of experts last month to discuss climate change risks and responses in the capital's Old and New Towns.

Edinburgh is the first such UNESCO site to complete a climate vulnerability index that systematically and scientifically addresses threats to its heritage designation in the light of local community perspectives.

Interesting points included:

- **Hotter/drier springs and summers** will impact human physiology (indoors and outside), geological substructure, and green urban spaces.

- **Use of space** for leisure/tourism must adjust. Need for flexible management of events to cope with expected unpredictable weather. Rainier and stormier winters are anticipated. Edinburgh's ability to cope with rainfall is already at capacity. Flash floods have negative impacts above and below ground.

- **More humid conditions** will encourage growth of damaging vegetation/fungi on and within structures.

- **Compromises** between traditional architectural styles and effective pragmatism may be necessary to cope with changing conditions.

- **Proactive and regular maintenance** of historic structures is vital. Barriers to this – e.g., difficulty of communal decision making, shortage of skills and materials, high labour costs – must be overcome.

EWB will prioritise political responses to climate change in the run-up to next year's Council elections.

Someone working in the private **Dean Gardens** was spotted dumping vegetable refuse into the **Water of Leith** last month. For over 2 hours, a *Spurtle* reader observed fly tipping of **trees, shrubs, and grass** into the river. We have withheld the informant's name to avoid dropping them in it. **Report illegal dumping** at [bit.ly/36czbBk].

Cllr Gordon 'Che' Munro will not stand as Labour councillor for Leith (Ward 13) in next year's local-authority elections. He cites preventative medical reasons. In May, Munro – **first elected in 2003** – was suspended for 3 months after not supporting the SNP/Labour Coalition budget; something he described as '**petty and vindictive**'. A party insider tells us, 'There will now be all-out factional strife in **Edinburgh North & Leith Labour** over who might replace him.'

Fika Studios has opened at **74 Broughton St**, offering haircuts and beard trims. *Fika* is a Swedish way of taking time each day for friends/family with coffee or tea and **something nice to eat**, not usually including bits of beard.

**Spurtle Team:** E. Dickie, J. Dickie, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, S. Michael, M. Orr, C. Roussot, E. 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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## RODNEY STREET BARBERS

Julie 07989 441557, 42 Rodney Street  
Tues–Fri, 11am–5pm; Sat, 10am–2pm



## 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: 16 August on Microsoft Teams.**  
For local information visit the website at <https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

## Deidre Brock MP Edinburgh North & Leith



@deidrebrock  
DeidreBrockMP  
dbrockmp.scot

### Surgeries

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Every first Friday<br>1-2pm                  | Every third Friday<br>1-2pm            |
| Constituency office<br>166 Great Junction St | Stockbridge Library                    |
| Every second Friday<br>3.30-4.30pm           | Every last Friday<br>4-5pm             |
| McDonald Road Library                        | Royston/Wardieburn<br>Community Centre |

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deidre.brockmp@parliament.uk



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## Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament  
for Edinburgh Northern and Leith  
Constituency

[www.benmacpherson.scot](http://www.benmacpherson.scot)



### 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.

@ben.macpherson.msp@parliament.scot

0131 600 0134



December 2020



**NEW TOWN & BROUGHTON  
COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**Representing locals' views**  
to City of Edinburgh Council.

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and make a difference.

**Next meeting:**  
**Monday 9 August on Zoom.**

Contact us at

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