

# Spurtle



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Tel: 07455 770474

[spurtle@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:spurtle@hotmail.co.uk)

**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER** Free

## FOR FAIRER, FOR FOULER – WHO'S DOING WHAT

Three weeks after May's Local Govt Election in the capital, announcement of a Coalition Administration marrying together the Labour, Liberal-Democrat, and Conservative Parties came just too late for us to report in Issue 318. We look forward to chronicling this harmonious ménage à trois for years to come.

Council Leader Cammy Day says priorities include: tackling poverty; improved basics such as road repairs and bins; in-housing of council services; 25k new social homes; implementing the Tourist Tax, and regulating short-term lets. He aims to secure more funds for the city as a whole, but claims that without them savings of £50m will be needed in 2023/24.

### Weill-kent faces

Below we list those representatives elected for Spurtleshire (parts of Wards 5, 11, 12) who have been appointed to committees other than Edinburgh Council. Cllr Graham (Lab) has no such appointment.

*Culture & Communities:* McFarlane, McNeese-Mechan, Mitchell. *Development Management Subcmte:* Dalgleish (Convener), Mowat, Osler. *Edinburgh Integration Joint Board:* Mitchell, Nicolson. *Finance & Resources:* Nicolson. *Governance, Risk & Best Value:* Mowat, Nicolson. *Housing, Homelessness & Fair Work:* Caldwell. *Policy & Sustainability:* Bandel. *Jean F. Watson Bequest:* McNeese-Mechan, Mitchell, Osler. *Licensing Board:* McNeese-Mechan. *Licensing Subcmte:* Caldwell, Mowat (Convener), Rae. *Lothian Valuation Joint Board:* Caldwell, McFarlane, Mitchell. *Planning:* Dalgleish (Convener), Mowat. *Policy & Sustainability:* Bandel, Miller. *Regulatory:* Caldwell, Mowat, Rae.



## OUT OF THE BOX



This work on paper (attached to Ladbroke's in Rose St Lane South) is by French street-artist Sebastien Bouchard [[bit.ly/3MA8vNm](https://bit.ly/3MA8vNm)]. It reworks in blues a c.1760 self-portrait by Scottish artist David Martin (1737–98), now held at the Scottish National Gallery. Martin lived in St James Sq from the 1780s onwards, so who'd bet against Bouchard's homage being a way to bring the great man back home among us. Thanks go to reader @TheRealNickJury, who first alerted us to it.

## St MARY'S MUSIC SCHOOL PLANS

Revised layout arrangements have been submitted for the new St Mary's Music School at the old Royal High School on Regent Rd (22/02499/FUL). Some 103 documents appear in the application, of which we found 3 – the Design & Access Statement I–II and the Landscape Design & Access Statement – easiest to understand [[bit.ly/3mjto4Q](https://bit.ly/3mjto4Q)].

Main proposed variations to the plan consented in 2017 include:

- Wider gates, less parking, more garden at the western approach.
- Well-defined and segregated new entrance pavilion/portal to the school at the west end of the campus.
- Revised number and size of practice rooms.
- Changes to north face of West Pavilion to allow disabled-accessible café and terrace.
- Revised, horizontal glazed slot in the portico pavement, letting sunlight reach Assembly Hall below.
- In main concert hall galleries, replacement of cast-iron columns with (architect Hamilton's intended) wooden brackets.
- Handrails and balustrades for external circulation on the main elevation.

Revisions resulted from 'developments in the client's brief, new energy objectives, a full survey of the site, and general design development'.



## LOCALS REPORT POOR AIR IN PARK

Friends of King George V Park report problems with air quality experienced here by users and neighbours.

Thick dust from demolition work on the adjacent former RBS site is to blame. Some locals claim mitigation measures promised by the developers are not being applied well enough, if at all. Others even suggest material is being brought in from elsewhere for crushing on-site.

New Town Qtr developers are assessing the situation, New Town & Broughton Community Council is keeping an eye on it, and local councillors have been informed.

Meanwhile, reader Peter Clarke reports two parties held in the park on the night of 20/21 June. Bottles, food and other items were left scattered in all directions round benches in the morning, and in the smaller grassed area adjoining Eyre Pl. 'Far more worrying though were the pills. God knows what they are. Potentially lethal to any dog or child!'

Happier news: an apple tree donated by local resident Torrey Edwards was planted near the Logan St Gate on 21 June.



## LEATHERS WIN BINGO HALL BATTLE

Members of the Planning Cmte last month voted by 9 votes to 2 to overturn a decision made in Feb and instead include the whole Halymre St Bingo Hall within an enlarged Leith Conservation Area (Issue 316).

The decision means demolition of the much loved but unlisted building will be more complicated (although not impossible) if developers seek to replace it in future.

Community councillors presented a passionate and reasoned case for defending the building. They said the earlier planning process had been flawed and circumvented community consensus about how the hall was used by and reflected Leith residents past, present, and future.

A Council officer responded by again arguing that permeable access to the area could require partial demolition in years to come. He regretted poorly articulating such arguments to locals and elected members earlier. Some observers later suggested full clarity had not been achieved in this second presentation either.

Supporting Cllr Booth's amendment to include the hall within the Conservation Area, former Planning convener Cllr Gardiner described the structure's 'tapestry' of traditional materials. He said its multiplicity of uses for work and sociability were as important as any architectural merits (or lack of them).

Cllr Mowat acknowledged this 'significant' building's 'community heart' and apologised for the Committee's previous decision based on incomplete information from officials.

The decision was a resounding (if belated) victory for Leith's collective identity. It resulted from determined unpaid community councillors' ability to understand such sentiments, and to frame them within the technical terms required by Planning. It was a good day for Leith, and a good day for local democracy.



# Briefly



**Jubilee fervour bubbled over briefly** or indoors or not at all in Spurtleshire on the 3–5 June weekend. We found this barking display on Henderson Row, spotted a solitary Union Flag outside **Canonmills House**, and heard of alfresco jollifications on **Bellevue Ter.** Elsewhere there were **20 official road closures** for community events in the royalist heartlands of: Corstorphine/Murrayfield, 6; Portobello/Craigmillar, 3; Liberton/Gilmerton, 2; and Almond, 2. **One efflorescence of bunting** occurred in each of the following wards: Colinton/Fairmilehead; Morningside; Forth; Craighentiny/Duddingston; Fountainbridge / Craiglockhart; Southside/Newington; and Inverleith.

Good news for **ophidiophobes.** Handrails along the steep serpentine Snakey between **Glenogle Rd** and **Saxe Coburg Pl** will be reinstalled in mid-July.

The Whisky Shop promises a new ‘flagship destination’ at **18 Multrees Walk.** It will offer an experience which reflects the store’s ‘**brand, ethos and luxury positioning**’ (presumably, not head down an Arabascato marble loo pan in the Balmoral).

Plans have been submitted for a new 2-storey, 3-bedroom, family **mews-style home** with integral garage for pet car on vacant land at **15 Cumberland St SE Lane** (22/02329/FUL). This latest plan replaces consented (separate) ones for a 1-bedroom home in 2021 and a **Theosophical Society TARDIS** in 2018 (Issue 274).

Award-winning social enterprise **Hey Girls** [bit.ly/3x5pqSs] has teamed with Edinburgh Council to provide **free period products** in public buildings. You can, for example, help yourself from a dispenser in the foyer at **McDonald Rd Library.**

Consent has been given to alter and convert **13–17 Forth St** and **6 Broughton St Lane** into a 55-bed, reception-free apart-hotel (Issue 315). **Some 21 objection letters** raised: too many hotels already; likely noise and disturbance; inappropriate design; negative impact on Conservation Area. Elsewhere, permission has been granted to demolish **16 Annandale St.** Hackland & Dore plan 9 flats and a retirement nest egg here (Issue 312).

Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society has announced 5 new venues for street performers from **5–29 Aug.** Locals who don’t enjoy culture with their fresh air should avoid **E Princes St Gdns, Multrees Walk, St Andrew and Cathedral Sqs.**

## Getting to grips with short-term lets

Campaigners at Place Edinburgh last month submitted views to Edinburgh Council on short-term lets and their licensing.

Among STLs’ many negative impacts, PE identified:

- Economic costs, including reduction of tourist spend and reliable tax payments.
- Unacceptable loss of privacy and security for residents forced to share communal space with fee-paying strangers.
- Anti-social behaviour – noise, waste disposal, parking, damage to property, overcrowding, disturbance.
- Damaging effect of multiple transient visitors on permanent residents’ mental health.
- Uninsured properties and lack of safety checks.
- Displacement of community and local workforce.
- Increased rents and housing prices.

PE opposed temporary exemptions for licences and called for applicants to be refused if they have run STLs without planning permission, ignored complaints by residents, or ignored other legal requirements for running a business. Its full response: [bit.ly/3xlhcH9].

If you’re unlucky enough to find yourself next to a disruptive STL, there’s practical advice on how to proceed here: [bit.ly/3Q4AvM8].

## Still clutter but better?

British Telecom wants to remove phone kiosks near 117 Dundas St and 36 Raeburn Pl and install multipurpose ‘Street Hubs’ carrying adverts instead (22/02526/FUL; 22/02538/FUL; bit.ly/3xLsh35).

Edinburgh Council consulted citizens about outdoor digital advertising (ODA) in 2018, the results of which survey informed (but did not necessarily shape) revised guidelines in Aug 2019 [bit.ly/39Ko7kk].

Out of c.400 responses, a ‘range of suitable locations’ were ‘supported in principle’: bus shelters in shopping (73%) and residential areas (43%), private businesses (46%), vacant sites or buildings (38%). Only 35% thought litter bins were suitable sites, but these were approved nonetheless.

Around 87% felt some areas and types of building were unsuitable for ODA, including the World Heritage Site and Conservation Areas. The Council agreed, and in theory ODA is not now permitted in Princes and George Sts.

Some 43% disliked or strongly disliked ODA, while 27% liked or strongly liked it, and 19% neither liked nor disliked it and/or had no opinion. Despite such hostility, the Council seems to have reasoned ODA is unavoidable. But in managing its introduction, they have two core aims.

(1) Protection/enhancement of built heritage, especially the World Heritage Site and Conservation Areas and setting of important landscape features and listed buildings/monuments. (2) Minimising street clutter by rationalising street furniture and signage.

In BT’s own words, SHs are ‘free-to-use, fully accessible community assets connecting and improving local streets in urban areas’. Would their introduction in shopping areas of the World Heritage Site constitute improvement or continued defacement of these sensitive areas?



## Powderhall plans revealed

Phase 3 of Edinburgh Council’s Powderhall development was sketched out at pre-application notification events last month [bit.ly/3y5dy4C].

The proposals envisage 230–50 energy-efficient homes for social rent, mid-market rent, and (55%) private sale. The 4-block, 3–6-storey scheme includes a ‘civic square’ but no car parking. Some doubt how this will work in practice. Others question traffic circulation arrangements within the site.

Up to 850 people, including families, with varying needs and access requirements would be accommodated. Pedestrians and cyclists would be prioritised over cars.

A central green corridor through the site provides ‘flexible multi-use open space and pedestrian connection to building entrances’.

There are also plans for natural play features, growing spaces, and enjoyable social nodes for ‘congregation’. ‘Opportunities for rain gardens throughout’ may please those who like growing their own water.





## How to consult better? What do you think?

A new research project launched in Edinburgh last month with the aim of improving community consultation and city planning.

Our Edinburgh Neighbourhood (OEN) rejects the superficial 'tick-box' approach adopted by some developers and instead seeks 'meaningful and inclusive input, democratising development decision making. We will provide high-quality research grounded in our city's experience.' Much of OEN's work will be focused through the lens of 20-minute neighbourhoods. To find out more and/or get involved, see the article on our website here [bit.ly/3Ovwy1x].

The project is hosted by Edinburgh University, Edinburgh Council, Edinburgh Vocational Organisation Council, and the Scottish Govt. It forms part of a larger 4-nations project called Community Consultation for Quality of Life, spearheaded by the Quality-of-Life Foundation and the University of Reading.

OEN promises much and has much yet to deliver. However, we think it's a positive initiative, not least if it prompts Edinburgh Council to recognise and rectify the many flaws in its own public-consultation practices.



## Briefly



The local branch of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain, based at **14 Royal Ter**, was awarded £5k by the University of Edinburgh's Local Community Grant Scheme last month. Chair **Anna Beaton-Hawryluk** (L) speaks of unimaginable challenges faced by refugees arriving here. She says the hub's information sessions and social/cultural activities will **support new arrivals** and help those experiencing trauma.

Permission is sought to convert a basement office at **46 India St** into one 4-bedroom flat or two 2-bedroom flats. The premises were home to legal firm Gibson Kerr. Meanwhile, at **38-40 Dundas St**, there are plans to convert part of the ground-floor and lower-ground-floor office of Marwick Solicitors into an **inconvenient, L-shaped, 1-bedroom dwelling**. Much as some may wish it otherwise, these unconnected proposals do not reflect a concerted effort to **purge the area of lawyers**. Rather, there has been a profit-led trend since 2019 for **re-domesticating commercial properties** in the New Town.

**Bees ailing in the city centre** should be offered a solution of two parts sugar to one part water, according to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds [bit.ly/3H151O9]. Do not try this at **16A Broughton St** in July/Aug, where Something Fishy's **Daniel Bee** is closing the shop for 6 weeks while he recovers from a foot operation. Updates to follow.

Plans are afoot for a dog-grooming parlour at **134 Dundas St**. Shop shape would suit dachshunds.

Since Issue 318, there have been 3 retrospective applications in our area for **conversion to short-term lets** on: Dundas St, Broughton Pl Lane, and York Pl. Scottish Ministers turned down an appeal against closure of **25B Thistle St**, but will it be enforced?

In a sign of post-St James Qtr pressures and opportunities faced by **'one of Europe's most beautiful shopping streets'**, RCI SPV 2 Ltd is angling to turn 3 levels of **118 Princes St** into a carry-out and public house. Elsewhere, Leith Depot at **138-40 Leith Walk** (Stead's Pl) now has Council consent to extend next-door into **No. 142**.

**A blue commemorative plaque** has appeared without fanfare or official sanction outside a **No. 10 address** in the New Town. 'IN RECOGNITION OF PADDY GALLAGHER,' it reads, 'FOUNDER OF PADDY'S BAR. A GENUINE SAVIOUR DURING THE 2020 PANDEMIC.' **What selfless acts does this recall?** we wonder. *What work events? What cake?*

## And another thing ...

The same reader whose steam we vented in Issue 318 anent the irritations of metal confetti gets vexed too over the blight of plastic vegetation. Ersatz plants – flowers, lawns, arbours, hedges – support little wildlife and are bad for the environment.

As seen here outside the controversial Kingsford Residence on McDonald Rd, they have as much charm as a mirthless nightclub bouncer.

How can we encourage Planners and responsible proprietors to use something greener and pleasanter?



## Pane in the bar

Evening drinkers at Weatherspoon's bar in the Omni Centre were surprised by the unscheduled arrival of a huge glass panel on 17 June. It damaged tables and chairs but – fortunately – not people.

*Spurtle* has approached Omni for comment on the safety of other overhead panels nearby, and we await a reply.



## Leith Walk councillors on Broughton

The four Leith Walk councillors (Ward 12) outlined their priorities for the next five years at a public meeting convened by Better Broughton activists last month [bit.ly/3yu4zdD].

*Jack Caldwell* (LibDem) says getting basics right (e.g., bins) should come before big capital projects. He wants to address the neglected public realm, especially on pedestrian-unfriendly streets lacking dropped kerbs. Perhaps overstretched Planning and Licensing funds could be boosted from the 'Tourist Tax'.

*James Dalgleish* (Lab) sees active travel, good public transport, and clean streets as key. Some recently diverted bus routes are better and should be kept. He's disturbed by traffic pollution round schools. He wants more affordable housing and better regulation of short-term lets.

*Amy McNeese-Mechan* (SNP) favours mutual respect and improved civic discourse to make lockdown clean air a permanent feature of Edinburgh life. She is passionate about linking Redbraes to St Mark's Park, and about reducing pollution impacts on children.

*Susan Rae* (Grn) says lack of housing is key and blames short-term lets for expensive-to-tidy street littering. She sees potential problems with Council officers handling STL applications under delegated powers. To limit student housing we need changes in the law. Affordable housing should be a human right, not an aspiration.

All four councillors were a bit woolly on detail when it came to Broughton-specific (rather than Leith) details concerning cycle lanes and Picardy Pl. To varying degrees, they each swerved a clear invitation to expound on teaching of trans-gender issues in schools, although Rae said councillors would, of course, always protect children. Together, they displayed a genial determination to cooperate – long may it last.



# Moreover ...

**Angels Event Experience Ltd** will manage 'Edinburgh's Christmas' for the next 3+ years. News of the £5.47m contract was met with surprise by local shepherds after last month's meeting of the **Finance & Resource Cmte** [bit.ly/3Hn9EHh]. The Council also awarded a £4.06m contract to **Unique Events Ltd** for 'Edinburgh's Hogmanay'. Both tenders responded to public concerns about the festivals' size, scale and location. Events producer **Underbelly Ltd** bid unsuccessfully for Christmas (which it had run since 2013) and did not compete for Hogmanay (run since 2016). **We join those who won't miss them.**

**The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh** has received planning consent to alter the internal layout of its toilet block in the **John Hope Gateway on Arboretum Pl** [bit.ly/3u1kmh8]. The old entrance from the east Entrance Foyer will be sealed and replaced by a new one (plus external glass canopy) through the grey stone outer leaf to the north. The Disabled WC will be repositioned, as will the Parents Room – now renamed the **Changing Places Toilet** for obvious reasons. All facilities will rotate widdershins by 90°, with the Gents **gaining two stalls and losing a urinal** in the process. The number of female conveniences remains unchanged. As before, there will be an **unnecessary, large, indoor assembly area** outside the doors to each component. *Spurtle* favours less lobby, more jobby.

So many pressing issues face **New Town & Broughton Community Council** this summer that it will break with tradition and meet on 11 July.

**Fettes Row & Royal Crescent Association** celebrated its 50th birthday last year and will hold its 50th AGM this July. It seeks **new members**, including a chair, for its committee. Interested parties should first contact secretary **James Kilner** (jkjourn@hotmai.com). FRRCA also welcomes new members from **community associations** active in monitoring local important issues, not least redevelopment of the former RBS site.

Some readers in **southern Spurtleshire** were surprised last month by the passage of around two dozen cyclists wearing no or very few items of clothing. It was all part of **Edinburgh's annual World Naked Bike Ride**, participants pedalling from Middle Meadow Walk to Burntisland on Sat 18 June. One **veteran Picardy resident** told *Spurtle* afterwards she'd witnessed nothing that afternoon she hadn't enjoyed better displayed on **previous occasions elsewhere**, and was disappointed by the poor showing of **bicycle bells**.

**Spurtle Team:** E. Dickie, J. Dickie, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, S. Michael, M. Orr, C. Roussot, E. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.  
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**Mobile Hairdresser & Barber**  
**M: 07883 390409**  
[info@neilpurveshairdressing.com](mailto:info@neilpurveshairdressing.com)

## 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. 15 August, Nelson Hall, McDonald Road Library.**

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

## Deidre Brock MP

*Edinburgh North & Leith*



Regular constituency surgeries are now resuming by appointment only.

Full details can be found on my website [dbrockmp.scot](http://dbrockmp.scot) or contact my office by email or phone for more information about surgery dates and locations.

Stay safe, Deidre.

166 Great Junction Street, Edinburgh EH6 5LJ  
[deidre.brock.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:deidre.brock.mp@parliament.uk) – 0131 555 7009



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## Lorna Slater MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region



The Scottish Parliament  
 Parliament na h-Alba

@LornaSlater.MSP  
 @Parliament.scot

0131 348 6997

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

@LornaSlater

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## Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



The Scottish Parliament  
 Parlamaid na h-Alba

"I am here to help and serve all constituents in Edinburgh Northern and Leith. If there is something I can assist you with, or if you would like to discuss any issues or ideas, please contact me or come and see me at one of my monthly Drop-in Help & Advice Surgeries."

**Drop-in Help & Advice Surgeries**  
**Friday 1 July 2022**

**9:30 to 10:30**  
 Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre, 11 Pilton Drive North, EH5 1NF

**11:00 to 12:00**  
 Prentice Centre, 1 Granton Mains Avenue, EH4 4GA

**15:30 to 16:30**  
 Leith Community Centre, 12A Newkirkgate, EH6 6AD

Email: [ben.macpherson.msp@parliament.scot](mailto:ben.macpherson.msp@parliament.scot)  
 Telephone: 0131 600 0134

@BenMacpherson BenMacSNP BenMac www.benmacpherson.scot

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## CHAMPION'S CHALLENGE



**CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY CLUB**

**1-5 Aug: 10am to 11.45am**

Come and enjoy Bible stories, crafts, music and lots of fun activities!

Register online at:  
[www.bellevuechapel.org](http://www.bellevuechapel.org)

Bellevue Chapel, Rodney Street