

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

WORK STARTS ON STEAD'S PLACE HOUSING

Construction began last month on the 2.9-acre site behind Stead's Place.

Some 110 build-to-rent units will rise first, scheduled for completion in spring 2024. Work on the second stage – 23 social-rent and 15 mid-rent 1–3-bedroom homes – will start at the end of 2023. They will be operated by Hillcrest Homes.

The route between Pilrig Park and Leith Walk will close between 18 July and 26 Sept during excavations. For monthly news and updates on the building, visit [\[bit.ly/3yNLxyV\]](https://bit.ly/3yNLxyV).

Drum Property Group acquired the site in 2017. It describes the 5 years since as comprising research, planning and 'local community engagement'. As one veteran of the Save Leith Walk campaign put it to *Spurtle* last month, 'Aye, that's right.'

Refurbishment of the Scottish Art Deco red-sandstone structure fronting Leith Walk (pictured) finished on 8 June. Imaginatively named The Red Sandstone, it will comprise shops, offices, cafés, and a bar.



MIRROR, SIGNAL, MANOEUVRE



Photo: Jake King.

On the morning of 20 July, a taxi driver dropping off his passenger in Forth St applied the accelerator instead of the brake. The result was damage to the car (a write-off), some Georgian masonry, 5 steps, and a run of original railings. A fire engine and ambulance attended, but driver, passenger, and passing pedestrians all escaped injury. Such incidents have a long history in the New Town, as the example reported on Page 3 makes clear.

INVASION FROM MMMARS REPELLED

A Scottish Govt Reporter has dismissed MMMARS Dundas Ltd's appeal against refusal of planning permission for demolition and redevelopment of 108–14 Dundas St (PPA 230-2364).

Reacting to the news, local resident and objector Chris Day told *Spurtle*: 'We're delighted to see the back of this monstrosity, which has been hanging over us for two years. Just shows we don't have to accept design by catalogue, disregarding local views; no matter how much it's wrapped up in fancy language.'

The Reporter accepted many aspects of the appeal's reasoning. But crucial were his findings that:

- The proposal's corner section would be 'discordant and jarring with the wider street scene' and diminish the status of listed buildings at 13–24 Fettes Row.

- Loss of light into and outlook from 120 Dundas St would have a significant negative impact on residential amenity.

- There would be a detrimental effect on the World Heritage Site's setting.

For these reasons, the proposal was not in accordance with the Council's development plan.

The Reporter also disagreed with the appellant's positive interpretation of Historic Environment Scotland's response.

Some locals may worry at his finding that removal of all or some trees here would be mitigated by other architectural improvements. Overall, we suspect MMMARS will take enough encouragement and guidance from the decision to launch a modified application in future.

For background, see [\[bit.ly/3OTiiAl\]](https://bit.ly/3OTiiAl); [\[bit.ly/3bVO6WA\]](https://bit.ly/3bVO6WA). For the full decision, see [\[bit.ly/3Ax5viJ\]](https://bit.ly/3Ax5viJ).

HIGH HOPES, SOME HARD TO SWALLOW



No, not an escaped beach toy but one of 55 giraffe models dotted round the city until 29 Aug.

This one, decorated by Sandra Russell, is outside Pilrig St Paul's. Other local examples are at Canonmills, Stockbridge, St Mary's RC Cathedral, the OMNI, and all over the First New Town.

Coordinated by Wild in Art, they 'celebrate Edinburgh's extraordinary heritage and cultural diversity', help the city recover from lockdowns, and raise funds for wildlife conservation. How, is anybody's guess. Maps and more at the Giraffe about Town website [\[bit.ly/3InQJMS\]](https://bit.ly/3InQJMS).

Meanwhile, critics on social media point out that giraffes in captivity tend not to thrive. We prefer our giraffes with holes in, each in their lone religious steeple.

TENNIS CLUB'S BRIGHT IDEA

Drummond Tennis Club on E Scotland St Lane will apply soon for planning permission to install six 8-metre masts with floodlights over its courts.

The development would serve to extend play-time, particularly in the autumn now that membership has doubled to over 200 since the Covid-19 lockdown. The season runs (depending on frost) from May–Nov.

Anticipating concern from local residents, DTC is keen to stress that the lights will be LED luminaires with 'own beam-width control' to minimise impact on neighbours. Full technical details will be available in the application.

DTC has leased ground here from the Council since the 1930s. Most members are local, 40% living within 400 yards of the club and 75% within a mile.



Briefly

Two-way road traffic resumed last month between **London Rd and Pilrig St** as tramwork progress continues. The project is on track to finish construction by the **end of this year**. Testing and commissioning will follow until **spring 2023**. So far, the project is within its **£207.3 m** budget.

BT applications to erect 'Street Hubs' on **Raeburn Pl and Dundas St** (Issue 319) have been refused. Officials said they would: have a high detrimental impact on the **character and appearance** of the conservation area; spoil **neighbouring properties' amenity**; and not meet non-statutory guidelines on **adverts and sponsorship**.

The Royal Bank of Scotland branch at **12 NW Circus Pl** is to close on 4 Oct. Average counter transactions here fell by 53% between Jan 2018 and Feb 2020, with customers switching to **digital banking and the mobile app**. The Covid pandemic also had a significant effect. A total of 37 RBS branches will close in 2022, the nearest survivor being at **142/44 Princes St**.



Powderhall Bronze Editions has opened as a contemporary fine art gallery at **4-5 Summer Pl** (the former Allan Makin & Sons piano showroom). It will showcase handcrafted **contemporary furniture**, and work from Scottish artists produced by the **lost-wax casting process** in the family-run company's Granton foundry.

The application to make a new roof terrace at **15 Queen St** (Issue 318) has been refused. The **Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland** disputed the need for such an extension and said it would spoil the skyline. Officials advised that the proposal would damage the listed building and not enhance or preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The **Scottish Govt** proposes capping three turrets on the South-facing boundary wall of **St Andrew's House** with recessed lead-finished timber roofs (22/03153/LBC). The aim is to avoid renewed **destabilisation of the structures** by pooled water, weathering, and plant growth. The effect on views would be negligible from the main building, and not visible from elsewhere in Edinburgh. The turrets in their original 19th-century form were watchtowers (5 m taller) for the former **Calton Jail** (1818-1937), and their retention was criticised by some who regarded them as **relics of a grim past**.

Since Issue 319, there has been a total of 2 applications in Spurtleshire for new short-term lets on **Queen St** and **St Stephen St**; and 2 for retrospective applications on **Abercromby Pl** and **Glenogle Rd**. Retrospective consent was granted for STLs on **Cumberland St**.

Glimmer of hope for rattled E London St locals

E London St locals have complained for years about disturbance caused by out-of-service buses rumbling across the setts here on what is not even a designated route.

We last reported their case in May (Issue 306) and July last year [bit.ly/3aVCCSM], but concerns about heavy traffic so close to homes and a primary school go back much further.

At last month's New Town & Broughton Community Council meeting, they called for a ban on buses on the street between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. seven days a week.

Lothian Buses (LB) representatives present at the meeting said they had sometimes been left with no alternative route due to tramwork-related road closures elsewhere. At other times, drivers returning to the depot had simply been keen to get off shift rather than wait ages in predictable traffic jams so close to their destination.

Now, though, there's a chance of improvements. The reopening of Pilrig St should help, as will other roadwork changes and the imminent reorganisation of LB's service timetable. We doubt it will be that simple.



City consults on women's safety

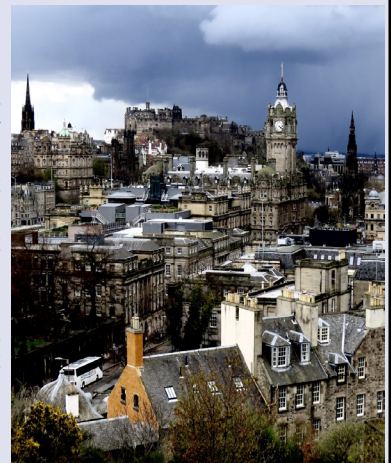
Last autumn, the Council's Policy & Sustainability Cmte agreed to consult on girls' and women's feelings about their personal safety in Edinburgh's public spaces.

'There is a lot of evidence that improving the safety of public spaces for women and girls contributes to improving public safety for everyone,' it says.

'Therefore, all residents are likely to benefit from learning from this exercise.'

As part of the process, a survey is available at [bit.ly/3PvdQIb] until 20 Sept. It should take 20 minutes to complete.

Findings will be reported to the Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership to inform current city approaches and to make recommendations for improving women's and girls' safety in public places in future.



Missed opportunities for city buses

A report produced by the Edinburgh Bus Users Group [bit.ly/3AypqO2] earlier this year examines Edinburgh Council's limited use of Planning legislation to leverage bus-service improvements.

Section 75 payments are funds secured by local authorities from developers to pay for facilities needed because of new developments.

Using a Freedom of Information request, EBUG found that, between 2015 and 2022, Edinburgh Council raised £84,230,232 like this, of which only £670,306 (less than 0.8%) was used for buses.

EBUG uses the New Town Qtr development on Dundas St/Fettes Row to explain why such figures disappoint. The £250 m development promises 350 homes and 700 jobs, supposedly adding £35 m per year to Edinburgh's economy.

So, why weren't quite modest S75 funds used to improve frequency of the 13 and 36 bus routes, or to provide proper shelters and real-time information on stops serving these and the 23, 27, and 8 routes? The answer seems to be the Council's lack of ambition. You can read the report here [<https://bit.ly/3Pa1Zie>].

In other analysis, EBUG examined how party manifestos related to Edinburgh buses at the May Local Govt Election [bit.ly/3RIL0eT]. The results may predict policy direction of travel and progress over the next 5-year cycle.

Close call too hot for comfort

What the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service called a 'large gorse fire' broke out and spread across Calton Hill on Sun 27 June. Four engines attended, extinguishing the blaze by around 1 am the next day. Police later said there were no suspicious circumstances. The old Royal High School was not damaged.

Photo: Ella Taylor-Smith.



Live and let fairly

With 292 local members, the Leith branch of Living Rent, Scotland's tenants' union, celebrated its official launch in June. Below, local activists explain the extent of the challenge and their response.

Extortionate rent hikes by landlords, coupled with stagnant wages, inflation approaching double digits, and sharp rises in the cost of energy mean low-income Edinburgh tenants face a desperate situation. Average rents here rose by 14.2% over 2021 to £1,214 per month, while the median salary fell by 2.3%. Many low and middle earners now spend more than half their income on rent.

Meanwhile, the quality of rented housing is often dire, with local-authority and private rentals having the highest levels of disrepair of any type of property tenure in Scotland. Despite incremental improvements in recent years, as of 2019, just under two-thirds of privately rented dwellings are in a state of disrepair (weather-tightness or structural stability), with 22% of households in this sector facing extreme fuel poverty.

Living Rent brings neighbours together to help communities tackle unfair landlords and big business. In addition to member defence and community issues, it has also campaigned around a Scottish Government consultation on the private rental sector. It seeks: points-based rent controls; greater penalties for landlords who don't adequately maintain properties; and greater protections for tenants, such as winter-eviction bans.

Amid this rent emergency, the need for collective tenant power has never been more urgent. With branches across Edinburgh, Living Rent is growing fast and always seeks new members to join in the fight to get safe, secure, and affordable housing for everyone. Contact us at: leith@livingrent.org.

A longer version of this article (with useful links) can be found on the Spurtle website at [\[bit.ly/3oigc11\]](https://bit.ly/3oigc11).



Briefly



According to its website, the **Tollhouse at 5 Brandon Ter** was to open at long last in July. As we went to press, it hadn't. We haven't found menus or booking details online. Our enquiries at the **Gardener's Cottage** have gone unanswered. Is that summer thunder we hear, or Canonmills borborygmus?

The **Museum of Scottish Fire Heritage** is at last nearing completion at its new home on **McDonald Rd**. We're told it will open sometime this autumn.

Edinburgh Council seeks a head tenant to maintain, sublet, and manage the newly refurbished **Powderhall Stables Block** at 165A Broughton Rd. It comprises 12 studios, 2 co-working spaces, and 2 community function rooms. Drearysome brochure at [\[bit.ly/3or19IM\]](https://bit.ly/3or19IM). **Submissions by noon on 31 Aug.**

Sad news. **Corson Hardware on Raeburn Pl** has closed. We don't know what has become of its enigmatic genius loci, but wish him a **long and happy alternative** to customer service [\[bit.ly/3AJioGs\]](https://bit.ly/3AJioGs).

Summer Fitness, a small independent gym based at 29a Beaverhall Rd, has plans for the old foundry at **28 Beaverbank Pl**. It wants to change its use from Class 5 General Industrial to Class 11 Assembly and Leisure. May suit Ironman triathletes.

MaRobert's Taste of Tanzania [\[bit.ly/3xZrbRy\]](https://bit.ly/3xZrbRy) hopes to attach 5 fascia-sign adverts to premises at **7 Dublin St**. The new café/bistro wants signage in red, orange, black, yellow, blue and green, thus brightening this dull old corner of the New Town and complementing the vibrant **E African-inspired cuisine** bubbling within [\[bit.ly/3NrIT66\]](https://bit.ly/3NrIT66). We wish them luck with that.

Police last month appealed for help to find next-of-kin for **Alex Fulton**, who died in June at a flat in **Canon St**. There were no suspicious circumstances surrounding the 81-year old's death. **If you have information**, call 101 quoting incident no. 0961 of 2 June.

Officials have rejected an application by **Atlas Guest House** owners to improve 'family' parking behind **30 London St** (21/01533/FUL). The delegated decision didn't mention neighbours' objections that changes were intended to **increase current commercial use**. Instead, it highlighted probable adverse effects on the **character, setting, and appearance** of the listed building and conservation area. This is the latest controversy in that leafy hotbed of strayed balls which is the **Bellevue Backlands** [\[bit.ly/3yCbWON\]](https://bit.ly/3yCbWON). We doubt it will be the last.

Life on the briny is not the solution

Foysoil Choudhury MSP, chair of the Forth St-based Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council, is worried about 700 Ukrainian refugees facing temporary accommodation on a ship in Leith Harbour.

The floating homes solution follows suspension of the Scottish Govt's Ukraine Super Sponsor Scheme while conventional housing is renovated.

But Choudhury insists chartering a vessel can only be a short-term response. He says the Scottish Govt must ensure conditions aboard are sanitary and fit for purpose in the meantime.

'We cannot afford to end up in a situation where people are still stuck on the ship as many years later as the previous waves of refugees have now been stuck in hotels.'

Extraordinary accident

From the Scotsman (14 July 1838).

On Thursday, between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, as a noddy* belonging to Mr David Robertson, coach-hirer, Dublin Street, with two persons on the driver's box, was proceeding down Duke Street,** the horse made a sudden attempt to turn into the stables in York Lane.

In order to check this movement, the person beside the driver seized the left rein and pulled the horse's head smartly round; at the same time causing one of its legs to strike against the wheel of the noddy. The animal, being frightened perhaps, with great fury instantly darted down Duke Street, turned into Abercromby Place, and overset the coach into the sunk area of the house of Dr Taylor, No. 1, in that street.

The consequence was, that the vehicle was dashed entirely to pieces, the horse killed, and the driver's arm broken in two places, besides one of his ankles thrown out of joint. The person who was on the dickey beside him was also severely hurt, but fortunately escaped without any broken bones.

About forty feet of iron-railing and parapet stone were thrown down with the concussion. The driver was taken to the Royal Infirmary, where, upon inquiry, we learn that he is doing well.

*2-wheeled cart. **Duke St was the name given to the section of today's Dublin St between Queen St and Abercromby Pl. Dr Taylor's house is now occupied by Dunpark Property Agents.



Moreover ...



We hear good things of **The Artisan Pasta Maker** [bit.ly/3OJ0ZkS], which opened its doors earlier this summer at **138 Dundas St** (noon–8.30 pm, Wed–Sat). The business is already an established presence on Suns at **Leith and Stockbridge Mkts**.

New EV charging points were scheduled to start operating by mid–late July on **E London St, Heriot Row, and Montgomery St**.

Plans for a new accessible entrance to Bunscoil Taobh Na Pairce on **Bonnington Rd** (22/02318/LBC) have been consented. The **Architectural History Society of Scotland** objected. It would prefer changes be made to a side rather than principal elevation of the listed building in a conservation area.

Kaplan International Languages hopes to move from Albyn Pl to new premises at **26 St Andrew Sq**, serving 150–300 students and employing up to 34 staff. The firm operates in 7 countries, teaching courses in **English, French, and German**, but not Bus-driver.

Spurtle can confirm that Sir Eduardo Paolozzi's **Master of the Universe** sculpture will move from a tucked-away spot off **Belford Rd** to **Princes St Gdns** when the National Galleries of Scotland's new exhibition space opens on/in/under the Mound next summer. How did we find out? Watch the **promotional fly-through** at [bit.ly/2Qu44HI] and don't blink. **You heard it here first.**

Deaf Action wants to facelift Category A-listed **49–51 Albany St**. Their heritage architects Simpson & Brown favour removing bars on basement windows, repainting the front door black, reapplying gold finish to the **'Church for the Deaf and Dumb'** letters on the tympanum, carving 'Est 1835' into the frieze, and outraging purists with a **non-Classical flagpole**. For early history of this institution, see Issue 198 [bit.ly/3P6z7rE] and Issue 201 [bit.ly/3cA71GL].

The large production unit based in **Drummond CHS playground** last month was for Apple TV's new drama **Debutante**, filming in the western New Town. It is supposedly an adaptation of Edith Wharton's unfinished **The Buccaneers**, set in New York. However, one insider described it to us as **'more like a Scottish Bridgerton'** involving **'jiggery-pokery and the Moray Feuars'**. The mind boggles, as does the sporrán.

A reader last month urged us to encourage **more Letters** [bit.ly/3ImV2bk]. We're happy to oblige. Please send your thoughts on **any topic of Spurtleshire interest** to our email at: spurtle@hotmail.co.uk.

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<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 or contact my office by email or phone for more information about surgery dates and locations.

Stay safe, Deidre.

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"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."

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

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