

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

NO GIVE ON DISRUPTIVE BUSES

Residents, community councillors and ward councillors were dismayed last month at Lothian Buses' failure to address concerns about intolerable disruption on E London St [bit.ly/No325p1].

LB representatives had earlier undertaken to present a mitigative action plan at last month's New Town & Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) meeting but did not turn up.

Cllrs Mowat and MacFarlane, Deidre Brock MP and Angus Robertson MSP have discussed the issues with LB. The first two said LB's communications were poor, and it had failed to acknowledge problems even though it understands them.



Image: GreenAvGeek [<https://bit.ly/GnAvGk>]

LB's suggestion that temporary partial closures of Leith Walk and North Bridge were responsible convinced no-one. NTBCC's Mike Birch said these factors are irrelevant in many instances, and do not explain drivers' route choices or speed on settled residential streets day and night. He found the company's approach disingenuous and disrespectful.

City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) is barred by law from running LB, even though it owns the business. Instead, it will revisit how surrounding streets are managed. Traffic restrictions could be introduced on E London St; Green St and Bellevue PI might provide a quieter alternative at night although there's a problem with speed bumps.

All present agreed on a need for up-to-date information on traffic volumes, speeds, vibration and air quality in the area. Several expressed affection for LB as a civic asset but disappointment at its treatment of the public.

Campaigners, some of whom already seek legal redress from LB for damage to their property, are considering next steps. See their dedicated website [bit.ly/LBnoise].

Similar bus-related problems occur on other E-W routes: London, Albany and Gt King Sts; Drummond and Abercromby Pls.

EARLY STAGE IN BROUGHTON



Image: © 2007 Broughton Spurtle.

'Dr Lavannya' was the 'Unexpected Star of the Show' in Michael McIntyre's BBC1 *Big Night* earlier this year. With only minutes to prepare, she delivered a spectacular song-and-dance routine fusing British and Indian influences [bit.ly/McInBigNt], Episode 2, mins 12, 53.

Locals recall Lavannya Manohar's earlier triumph at Broughton Primary School's first International Food & Culture event in Jan 2007 [bit.ly/DrLavannya]. On that occasion, she performed a traditional Indian dance to universal acclaim.

Whether Lavannya continues in Medicine or Showbiz or mixes the two, we wish her the best. She already has enormous followings on Instagram [[@lavsings](https://www.instagram.com/lavsings)] and Tik Tok [[@lav_sings](https://www.tiktok.com/@lav_sings)].

EYRE PLACE PROPOSALS TO BYPASS HEARING

CA Europe Operating Company has taken its applications for town houses and student housing at 72-4 Eyre Place direct to the Scottish Government (22/03833/FUL; 22/03834/FUL).

The Development Management Sub-Cmte hearing agreed on 11 Jan will not now take place.

CA Europe has appealed because CEC has not determined the case within the statutory timescale required. The two relevant applications were submitted to the local authority at the end of July 2022 and were scheduled for a decision by 30 Sept.

The merits of the proposal will now be decided upon by a Reporter (a lawyer specialising in planning cases) appointed by Scottish Ministers.

The outcome will be based on strict assessment of the Council's policies and guidance (PPA-230-2409; PPA-230-2409).

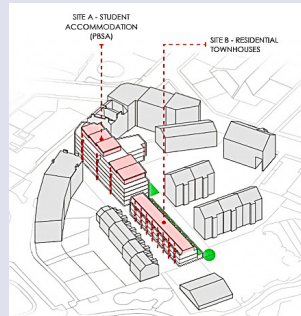
Material objections already submitted to CEC will still form part of the Reporter's considerations. However, local campaigners who feel they have been denied a public platform for their views are disappointed and annoyed.

Campaigner Vince Meiklejohn told *Spurtle*, 'The community feel very let down. We have met every deadline, followed the guidance, and it seems very unfair that we can't make our case at the DMSC meeting.'

Cllr Mitchell commented on Twitter, 'If this were to have been refused, I fully anticipated an appeal. Bypassing local democracy and the CEC hearing, supported unanimously by committee, leaves a bad taste. Residents' concerns won't be heard, and democratically elected councillors of the city won't have a say in the decision.'

Foysol Choudhury MBE MSP vowed to go further: 'Local democracy must not be circumvented. Residents must be heard. I'll pursue this matter.'

For longer coverage and links, see [bit.ly/EyPlapl].



COME RAIN OR SHINE



In a bid to boost the fortunes of Scottish high streets, Holyrood is expected to approve looser regulations for tables and chairs on footways outside cafes, bars and restaurants.

From 31 Mar, these businesses will no longer have to seek planning permission for outdoor rain-sodden quaffing and scoffing, but obstructive positioning will not be allowed. Some doubts remain about how the new rules (or lack of them) will apply in busy conservation and residential areas like those in Edinburgh's city centre and parts of Spurtleshire.

Other relaxations concern converting certain premises into cafes, restaurants and small businesses, and the installation of large EV chargers in car parks.

Briefly



Lucky Yu replaces Smoke Stack at **53 Broughton St**: dumplings, bao, yakitori, sando and, if its logo is to be believed, **unlucky cats**. Meanwhile, **Broken Clock**, the recently started café and patisserie at No. 27, has stopped [bit.ly/BrkClk]. Also meanwhile, Fopp, which closed on Rose St in Jan, reopened on Shandwick Pl in Feb.

Leith Walk reopened to 2-way traffic in Feb. Electrification then testing and commissioning of the tramway should start in Mar. The service aims to begin by 21 June. 'However,' says a CEC press release, 'due to industry-wide challenges with the availability of materials and skilled labour, impacted by Brexit and the war in Ukraine along with significant demand for labour in the UK and overseas, there are small pockets of public realm works that will now be completed over the coming months.' CEC will reconfigure the agreed but suboptimal layout of **Elm Row** after its legal obligations to the tram contractors are fulfilled. The future of the **Picardy Pl island** – its final design, safety audit and construction timetable – is currently less clear than liquorice-and-lentil soup.

CEC last month approved Cllr Parker's motion declaring a **Nature Emergency** in the capital. He said, 'It will be a first step to **supercharge efforts** for nature recovery in Edinburgh.' Our italics.

Buses resumed travelling both ways along **Leith Walk** on 16 Feb. The 10 Service will continue using **McDonald and Broughton Rds**. Some would like the 13 to follow suit and have additional stops.

At last month's NTBCC meeting, **Cllr Mowat** (who sits on both the Development Management and Licensing Sub-Cmtes) shared **general frustration** at a loophole allowing operators with alcohol licences but no planning permission to **keep trading time after time**. NTBCC will now lobby for a change in CEC's **Statement of Licensing Policy** to deny alcohol licences to pop-up operators who seek to repeat proposals similar to ones which have been refused planning permission in the past.

Edinburgh Street Food began serving customers 7 days a week in the **OMNi Centre** on 25 Feb [bit.ly/EdStFd]. It hosts independent local traders, brewers, distillers and soft-drink makers offering 'global flavours'. There is also vibrant, covered outdoor seating for 250 people off **Greenside Pl** in a once tranquil enclave with uninterrupted views of **Calton Hill**.

CEC has agreed to sell a plot of land on **Eyre Pl** for £505k to a developer which already owns the **Smithies Bar** site adjacent and means to build 11 low-rise homes on the amalgamated ground. The area, **used as a garden** since the 1980s, was previously occupied by a tenement and has been built on since at least the early 19th century. See [bit.ly/EyPlgdn].

More student housing, this time for Dunedin Street

London-based Danehurst Developments Ltd proposes 4–6-storey student accommodation on a 0.23 ha site at 22, 24–6 Dunedin St. The land, to the north of the Broughton Rd playpark, is occupied by a warehouse and yard.

The brick structure would have courts to the east and west with biodiverse planting. On the ground floor, matching SEPA flood advice, there would be no bedrooms. Instead: communal social spaces, reception, library, gym and dining areas.

The developer says there would be minimal loss of daylight to existing residents on Beaverbank Pl and no loss of privacy for a nearby office.

It claims its plans would not raise the student population to more than 50% of the local population and so meets Student Housing Guidance.

In a voluntary gesture, Danehurst's agent held a public consultation event in late Jan and invited feedback. At the time of writing, exhibition boards remained available here [bit.ly/DnstDv].

Danehurst expects to make a formal planning application later this month and, if it gets consent by Sept, to start building next year. We'll keep you posted.



Pavement parking – Blame Brexit and Covid-19

In Nov 2022, Leith Central Community Council and 3 other Leith CCs wrote to MSPs Ben Macpherson and Angus Robertson asking how new footway-parking legislation could be accelerated. They are anxious to prevent further damage to paving along the route of the tram extension [bit.ly/No324p1].

Jenny Gilruth MSP, Minister for Transport, replied last month. She says double-yellow-line restrictions along most of the tram route extend onto the footway and CEC can already enforce them using current powers. (CEC confirmed its intention to issue instant fines on 20 Feb.)

Gilruth says implementing the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019's parking provisions has been affected by parliamentary timetables responding to Covid-19 and EU exit preparations. Secondary legislation allowing local authorities' enforcement of some new aspects should be in place by the end of 2023.

You can read her letter in full here [bit.ly/JGMSPlt].

Delivering controversy

On 27 Jan, without comment, *Spurtle* posted a photo of a panda car parked on the expensive expanse of Leith Walk paving.

Some readers' frustration at such practice and at police failure to address it combined with other readers' distaste for the police in general. The resulting blend then collided with some readers' hostility to cyclists and others' to inferred criticism of the emergency services. Others still argued that parking for businesses here is inadequate.

A Crighton Pl Corryvreckan followed, with malcontents finding each other wrong-headed or unintelligible. After 24 hours, the original post had been viewed by 57k people, most of whom appeared to find each other annoying. Ten days later, another photo – this time of a lorry unloading from the footway elsewhere on Leith Walk – soon attracted a further 29k viewers in various degrees of frothing ferment.

These interesting episodes did not further *Spurtle*'s aims to stir reasonable debate and boost hyperlocal social cohesion. We posted a few of the more inoffensive responses here [bit.ly/LWlcpkng] and here [bit.ly/LWfroth].



Work continues to fine-tune Leith Walk

Leith Central Community Council discussed changes to Leith Walk at its Feb meeting.

They have doubts concerning Tram Team proposals to deviate from original plans and 'formally stop-up' Brunswick St at its northern end to prevent rat-running. They expect unexpected traffic consequences for neighbouring routes. Should left-turns into London Rd from Leith Walk be reconsidered?

LCCC continues to press the Trams Team for some element of tactile paving on the new continuous footways at junctions. They appreciate how these features prioritise pedestrians over cars but agree they endanger blind people and those in a dwam, especially when motorists don't respect the new order.

LCCC welcomes CEC's removal of its pre-weathered steel planters (rusty coffins) until more thought can be given to where they go. While potentially adding greenery to Leith Walk, the additions actually contributed to street clutter and attracted litter. There was no CEC programme to maintain them. Calls continue from locals for more trees on Leith Walk, even though there is limited space to introduce them around tram and utilities infrastructure.

City plans routes to future destinations

Edinburgh's Transport & Environment Cmte last month voted to consult the public on 5 complementary initiatives aimed at creating 'sustainable, safe, accessible and affordable travel around, to and from the Capital'.

They are summarised here [bit.ly/Edtransp]. Eye-catching elements include:

- Improved shopping streets and 20-minute neighbourhoods with less traffic and rat-running.
- A joined-up network of cycle routes within 400m of every household.
- Integrated ticketing across trams, trains, and Lothian Buses.
- A North-South tramline extension linking Granton to Little France and the alleged world beyond.
- Consideration of the South Suburban Rail Line and a cross-Forth ferry to the fleshpots of Fife.
- Improved parking management and enforcement.
- Possible reopening of a New Town-Old Town bridge across Waverley Station.

The combined plans are intended to 'work together towards key CEC objectives including cutting car kms by 30% by 2030, reducing congestion and improving health and wellbeing, as well as the vital net zero goal'. Consultation will run Mar-July 2023.

Meanwhile, for a fascinating map of the 1924 Edinburgh Corporation Tramways system, see Andy Arthur's masterpiece at [bit.ly/trmwypm].



Briefly



Following Issue 325's paint-spill elephant calf on **Melgund Ter**, we received another example of pareidolia in Feb. It was spotted on **London Rd** by Tibor Farkas, who perceives 'a young pig singing to the Heavens'. Oh God, what have we started?

The application to install 3 black solar panels on the roof of a garage in **Cumberland St NW Lane** (bit.ly/No324p1) has been granted.

A **Friends of Calton Hill** group was constituted last month and has applied to CEC for registration. Find them on **Twitter** [@focaltonhill].

Spurtle hears New Town residents transporting **cardboard boxes in 4x4s** to the communal recycling bin on **Cochran Ter** are not especially popular with locals there.

Open-night ceilidhs feature on most Fri nights in the Royal British Legion's **Rodney St** Elsie Clark Halls. No booking required. Cash only (£10) at the door. Licensed bar.

As part of its **Smart Cities Operations Centre**, CEC has so far fitted 2.8k sensors in bins around the city. When data platforms at **Rubbish HQ** are completed, service teams will analyse bin-fill levels, temperatures and other variables to 'identify trends/areas for investigation and to support effective service planning'. **And here comes the BUT**. In answer to Cllr Whyte's question last month about value for money, **T&E convener Cllr Arthur** replied, 'I feel that the scheme could contribute to street cleanliness, but any gain will not be sufficient to make good the underfunding of this service.'

The Woodland Creatures bar at **260-2 Leith Walk** is to replace its current Yukon-style timber frontage with a more conventional painted plaster render (colour to be confirmed) and uPVC glazed doors. We shall miss the old exterior, which always suggested there might be elk loose inside.

The former **London St Sauna** at 40-1 London St is on the market for offers **over £400k**. Planning consent was granted in Nov last year to develop the 241m² premises as two 3-bdrm flats [bit.ly/No324p1].

Priorities have changed at the **Albany St/Dublin St/Abercromby PI** junction. E-W traffic is now favoured over that going N-S. Locals want improved road signs to this effect.

Drivers who linger too long at ChargePlace Scotland's EV chargers get a **£30 fine**. More info at [bit.ly/EV30quid].

A phantom poo-circler in **Bellevue and Claremont** has been chalking round piles of dog excrement on footways. This action serves to **shame dog owners and alert pedestrians** to the hazards. We thank whoever is responsible.

Wet, wet, wet but why?

Following a thaw in the Pentlands and heavy rain on 29 and 30 Dec 2022, the Water of Leith overtopped at Stockbridge. But flood defences were equal to the task.

So, what went wrong on Howard St, Tanfield and Summer Pl? Here, basements were inundated, some to a depth of 4ft, causing thousands of pounds of damage to stock and structures.

CEC officials blame blocked gullies at Canonmills Bridge, where tarmac had entered the drains and set hard. They deny responsibility, as do Scottish Water. The finger of blame seems to point at a utility company, but which one? No one is jumping to own up. In the meantime, proprietors are out of pocket and still repairing their buildings.

CEC may not have caused the blockages, but it surely has a responsibility to check that gullies – not least those in low-lying areas – are in good working order. Blocked gullies on Canon and Huntly Sts exacerbated two floods in 2021 [bit.ly/No309p1].

Updated information about how and when Water of Leith flood defences are activated was expected to be published on the Council's website at the end of last month.



Auld Greekie – Edina Through the Looking Glass

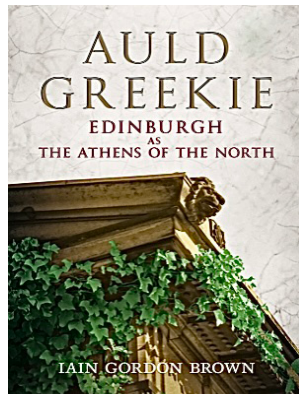
Spurtleshire resident and man of letters Dr Iain Gordon Brown has published a new and fascinating work of scholarship examining the period some 200 years ago when Edinburgh's self-identification as the Athens of the North was at its most intense.

Auld Greekie discusses the many aspects of this identification: topographical similarities; architecture and monuments; the realm of the mind. We meet both the proponents and the mockers of this proposition.

One of the book's most enjoyable sections, accompanied by useful images, compares the thoughts of the many writers who have tried to superimpose Edinburgh's topography over that of ancient Athens. George Sibbald, a naval surgeon who kept a journal of his travels in the eastern Mediterranean around 1816-18 and later wrote them up as a sort of travelogue, is fairly typical. He identified Calton Hill as Edinburgh's Acropolis, the Nelson Monument its Erechtheion and thus Nelson its Neptune, the god of the sea; Leith its Piraeus; Register House its Temple of Jupiter Olympius.

But even at that time, Edinburghers were mocked for the puffed-up vanity of their Athenian pretensions. Another writer, Mudie, mockingly noted that to proud Modern Athenians, 'the Firth of Forth outstretched and outshone the Aegean or the Hellespont'; 'Plataea and Marathon had nothing in them at all comparable with Pinkie and Preston Pans' and North Berwick Law of course surpassed its Athenian counterpart.

The parallels were however, frustratingly, never perfect. Was it Calton Hill or the Castle Rock that represented Edinburgh's Acropolis? In architectural terms, was Edinburgh Athens or Rome? Is the stuffed vine leaf the Greek haggis? These are just a few of the questions to which this book provides answers.—*Caroline Roussot* [Fonthill Media, ISBN 9781781558928, 368 pp.]



Moreover ...



We first noted the unusual modern dwelling opposite 107 **Broughton Rd** in Aug 2020 [bit.ly/trapzd]. Reader Sam Murray informs us the trapezoid now rejoices in the name Sceabhach; *sceabhach* being the Gaelic word for 'skewed'.

Such are the scale and complexity of proposals for student accommodation and affordable housing between **Leith Walk** and **Halmyre St** that the application will now be considered at a DMS hearing in May [bit.ly/LthWHImS]. A hearing is also scheduled for plans concerning **Rosslyn Cres** (on 15 Mar). Councillors are overjoyed at the extra workload.

Drivers breaking rules to turn left into **London Rd from Leith Walk** may not all be murderously cavalier. Observers suspect many are placing too **much confidence** in unupdated satnavs.

School Streets have part-time restrictions on driving motor vehicles along them at **school start and finish times, Mon-Fri**. There are already local examples at St Mary's (Leith) RC and Abbeyhill Primary Schools. Another is being discussed for **Stanwell St** next to Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pairce. A decision is expected by mid-Apr.

Some 4 supporting comments and 34 objections were lodged about plans to alter and extend the B-listed former Lancers restaurant premises at 5 **Hamilton Pl** [bit.ly/5HmltnP]. Locals say the proposal would **harm residential amenity** and the natural environment and would not sit well with neighbouring historic architecture.

Renaissance China will fill the empty premises at **30-2 W Annandale St**. The business specialises in restoring antique and modern ceramics and should be a useful addition if it's all cracked up to be.

Following a successful motion by Cllr Osler, officials are working on **specific tree-protection measures** to be included in any future contract between CEC and event organisers in **Princes St Gdns**. It's a 'tidying-up exercise', says Osler, designed to organise relevant policies in one place. It should be **more effectual** than the reactive 'blunt instrument of Planning Enforcement'.

CEC is not required to remove **Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders** before making them permanent, nor does it intend doing so. But if it *did*, removing then restoring Spaces for People changes on **Broughton St** and the **roundabout at its foot** would cost £25k and £10k respectively. Across the whole city, such **superfluous shuffles** would cost £1.095m says T&E Convener **Scott Arthur**.

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<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>



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11:00 to 12:00
West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre, 19 West Pilton Grove, EH4 4BY

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

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