

# Spurtle



Find us at: [www.broughtonspurtle.org.uk](http://www.broughtonspurtle.org.uk)



**November  
2023**

**No 334**

**Tel: 07455 770474**

**spurtle@hotmail.co.uk**

**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free**

## MORE DELAYS FOR POWDERHALL

Conversion of Powderhall Stables has stalled due to problems around water and electricity connections. A Council spokesperson tells *Spurtle*, 'Dialogue is ongoing between the Council's design team and utility providers. We are aiming to complete these discussions as soon as possible.' It's always good to have aims.



Meanwhile, progress has also stalled on building the mixed senior housing/nursery complex on the former bowling greens adjacent.

'Unfortunately, due to market conditions, it is taking longer than expected to finalise and agree a tender. Work is ongoing at the moment to address this. We hope to be in a position to start on site Q1 2024 but this is still subject to approval.' The project should take about 18 months to complete.

A planning application to develop new homes on the remaining Powderhall Waste Transfer site is being finalised. Officials expect this to be submitted before the end of the year, with work likely starting 12-18 months later.

## COLOURS IN THE COMMUNITY



**Meet Ellen Wilson, the new face of flowers at 87 Broughton St. Ellen's arrival in Oct was met with huge enthusiasm from both local residents and businesses, many of whom agree that the return of a florist's shop here feels like the best fit in this area's colourful and creative heart. See Page 3 for more.**

## COSTED OPTIONS SOUGHT FOR DISTURBED EAST LONDON STREET

At last month's Transport & Environment Cmte meeting, elected members accepted officials' report on E London St and an SNP addendum calling for a second report to be brought before them on 11 Jan next year.

The new report will detail costed merits and demerits of maintaining the status quo on the street, including impact on noise levels, sustainability and timescale for reconstructing the setts.

It will also examine the costed merits and demerits of changing the central carriageway from setts to tarmac and detail the administrative process necessary to achieve this.

Furthermore, it will look at the potential and costs for restricting heavy traffic movements along the street, and what other local routes that traffic might take instead. An air-quality report will become available in June 2024.

City Centre councillors McFarlane and Mowat argued that, due to overuse, years of no maintenance, high residential density and

the presence of a primary school, E London St should be prioritised. They pointed out that not all problematic heavy vehicles were buses and that a video traffic count should be used to clarify this.

Mowat also repeated claims made earlier by a deputation from the New Town & Broughton Community Council that officials had misinterpreted noise data and should reconsider it.

Locals we've spoken to welcome the committee's decision. It re-energises the hunt for solutions and obviates problematic issues being kicked into the bureaucratic long grass.



## St JAMES SQUARE STAYS VEHICLE-FREE

The Transport & Environment Cmte last month refused permission for the W Hotel (opening on 14 Nov) to admit executive coaches and taxis into St James Sq via Elder St.

The possibility of such access dated from when planning permission was granted for the hotel in 2015, but was always contingent upon granting of an ETRO or TTRO.

Officials had recommended a suck-it-and-see approach with 18 CCTV cameras monitoring patterns of use and any 'near misses' with people.

Councillors were more cautious and instead decided there was sufficient access from the underground car park. They voted to protect this popular through-route for cyclists and pedestrians. Emergency vehicles will be admitted when necessary.

Any other decision, Convener Scott Arthur said, would have been at odds with the city's traffic policies and the committee's evolved culture around active travel.



## Spurtle SUBSCRIPTIONS

It's Nov, and, as Christmas winks on the horizon, now is the perfect time to consider a fairly inexpensive present for loved ones anywhere in the UK you wish knew more about an extinct barony measuring roughly a square mile in the Scottish capital.

Mostly, we cover our costs through advertising. But subscribers help us stay independent and financially stable and represent a loyal pool of friends to whom we occasionally turn for advice. As always, we're a not-for-profit organisation run by unpaid volunteers.

To secure an annual subscription to the *Broughton Spurtle*, we now suggest £16 for local hand deliveries and require £24 for copies to be posted.

If you can help fund hyperlocal independent journalism, please make out a cheque to *Spurtle* and send it to us c/o The Yard, 61-63 Broughton St. Remember to tell us your address! Or email [spurtle@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:spurtle@hotmail.co.uk) to arrange an electronic transfer.

We try to report without fear or favour, support locals and generally stir things up a bit. Your contributions help. Thank you.

# Briefly



**E London St** resident Jamie Forbes has returned safely from an Icelandic Lava Trek. He describes the **58 km volcanic route** as challenging but very do-able, although heavy rain, strong winds and 3 nights in a cramped tent were tough to endure. His efforts have **raised £7,348 so far** for the homelessness charity Crisis, and his JustGiving page will remain open to donations at [[bit.ly/JFJG](https://bit.ly/JFJG)] until the end of the year.

Demolition of the former RBS building on **Dundas St** is all but complete. **Eyre Pl** neighbours reported shocking levels of disruption during the process, with clouds of dust and masonry falling onto their property. They say **measures to protect them** were ineffective.

In the *SME News* **Seventh Annual Scottish Enterprise Awards 2023**, *Spurtle* was delighted to be judged **Best Community Publication 2023**. We accepted the subsequent offer of a free listing in their **A-Z directory** but declined an invitation to spend £595–£4,995 on a range of promotional materials, **2 bespoke trophies and a wall plaque** for the office we don't have. Gift horse, mouth, looked. Onward and sideways.

**Deirdre Brock MP** has confirmed she will stand again as SNP Westminster candidate for **Edinburgh North & Leith**. As usual, we will gladly publish similar news about politicians **from all parties** in this or any other relevant constituency.

At the end of Sept, a Scottish Govt Reporter granted planning permission for conversion of the former clubhouse at **54 Rosslyn Cres** into a dwelling (PPA-230-2435). He refuted claims that the bowling green had ever been a **genuine 'community space'**, or that public toilets here should have been part of the plan, or that **local aspirations** for how the area is used had any relevance in **planning terms**. It remains to be seen whether the owners will go through with earlier plans to run part of the garden as an **educational allotment** for nursery children.

**Apex Properties Ltd** has lost its appeal to the Scottish Govt against Council refusal of consent for internal subdivisions at B-listed 11 Pilrig St. Leith Central Community Council objects to Apex's new proposal to run the property as a short-term-let.

Permission is sought for a change of use at **77 Dundas St** from bridal shop (formerly Olive Jones) to 'yoga/Pilates & content/photography studio' during the week and retail space at the weekend. We calculate that there are already 10 yoga centres in Spurtleshire, rendering **Broughton** one of the bendiest bits of the capital.

Councillors last month approved plans for a mixed hotel/retail development at **104–108 Princes St**. Hunter REIM and Ruby Hotels' £100m project adds to recent investments by other parties **totalling £550m** in 'one of Scotland's most iconic streets'.

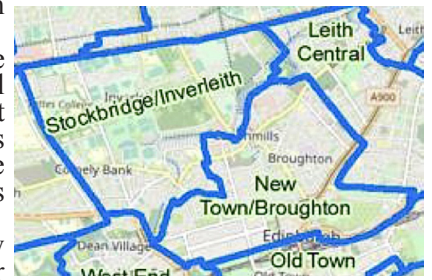
## Community councils review

Phase 1 of Edinburgh Council's review of 46 community councils' governance arrangements and boundaries began last month and consultation will continue until 18 Dec.

This is the first statutory review since 2019, and its eventual recommendations will aim to reflect population and development changes across the capital and identify ways in which community councils could be more representative and better run. Increased budgets would help but aren't on offer.

There is little clarity at present about how large community council areas should be, either in terms of geographical spread or number of constituents. We hear some politicians and officials favour new boundaries matching those of Council wards, but for the New Town & Broughton CC such a change would divide varied communities living close to each other with shared interests. There can also be advantages in having, for example, access to both the NTBCC and the councillors of three city wards when trying to exert influence.

To have your say, complete the online consultation [[bit.ly/EdCCcon1](https://bit.ly/EdCCcon1)] and/or attend one of the virtual/in-person 'drop-ins' listed here [[bit.ly/CCdrpins](https://bit.ly/CCdrpins)].



## Not such a bright idea

Citizens from across Edinburgh were bumbazed last month by the new digital screen installed outside the Omni Centre.

Particularly in the first few days after its arrival, observers jibbed at the size of the display (7.2 m x 23 m), its incongruity in the streetscape, its impact on residential amenity, and the likelihood of it dazzling or distracting drivers and causing accidents. The brilliance has occasionally calmed down since.

Officials made a fast-track decision to consent in Oct 2022 (22/02103/ADV) despite prescient objections from the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland. They said it did not raise issues in respect of amenity or public safety and was in accordance with relevant planning regulations and non-statutory guidance for businesses.

GEM Display Media Ltd own and operate the screen and, as a member of the industry body Outsmart, adhere to a code of conduct. That code says a screen of this size should not exceed a luminance of 300 candelas per sq.m, and that 'in the event of an issue with the brightness of a digital advertisement, they will work with the relevant Local Authority to investigate and resolve the matter efficiently and promptly'.

*Spurtle* understands Cllrs Graham and McFarlane prompted Council officers to approach GEM with a view to making adjustments.

In the meantime, it is perplexing to note that, in April this year, Edinburgh Street Food's much smaller and less bright exterior sign was refused advertisement consent because 'Due to its position, design, colour and lighting scheme, [it] constitutes an unacceptable intrusion into the streetscape, which would [create] clutter, to the detriment of amenity in the New Town World Heritage site and conservation area.'



## Short-term-let licensing

The city is a-flutter with short-term-let licence applications blooming on lampposts and railings. Applicants to the Council must display the completed notices near to the relevant property so that neighbours and passers-by can see the application, think about it, comment or object to [licensing@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@edinburgh.gov.uk) within 21 days. However, some of these notices seem to be either missing or placed on the other side of the road from the relevant properties, even though there are lovely railings right outside the appropriate door.

Take, for example, a secondary let (where no one lives) at Flat 1F, 2a Albany Street, where the notice is not on the railings outside the stair (like their neighbour's notice, who is planning to home-share) but across the road on a lamppost. Or Flat 3, 9 Abercromby Place: another secondary let, with no notice anywhere to be seen.

Licence applications are listed at [[bit.ly/STLsEd](https://bit.ly/STLsEd)] but lack useful detail.

## BlackRock on Brandon Street

Earlier this year, BlackRock announced plans to transfer around 900 staff in 2025 from premises in Exchange Pl to the former Standard Life building at 20 Brandon St.

Eventually, as many 1,400 staff could operate from the 3.7k sq.m office, but the investment and asset-management giant will first modernise and upgrade the building and improve landscaping. In mid-Sept it held its first consultation event to keep locals abreast of developments.

The arrival of so many workers and eventual completion of the New Town North complex just up the hill will have a major positive effect on businesses in Broughton St, Dundas St, Rodney St and, of course, Canonmills. It will also go some way to restoring the Spurtleshire economy following the departure of RBS from the area in 2018.

## How to manage amplified busking?

The Culture & Communities Cmte last month considered problematic amplified busking in the city. Local councillors McFarlane, McNeese-Mechan, Miller and Mowat made contributions to the discussion.

A recent Council survey revealed widespread support for busking among the public, but also noted the nuisance of excessive amplification and noisy crowds for nearby residents and businesses 'especially when the busker has a limited repertoire'. Six hours of uninterrupted 'Wonderwall' is no fun if you can't get away from it.

At present, Police Scotland alone can force buskers to quieten down or move on, but its officers have bigger fish to fry. The Council must gather more site-specific evidence before it can justify new byelaws for hotspots but will first discuss with the Scottish Govt whether powers to tackle excessive noise can be transferred to local authorities. Any progress will be slow.

In the short term, officials will 'consider more active management of on-street activities', working with the Licensing team and seeking better voluntary cooperation from performers before calling in the police. With present numbers, they have insufficient staff and budget to do this. Future 'seasonal support' might be paid for from a Visitor Levy and/or licensing. Lamppost signage will be improved. C&C will reconsider the issue in Dec.

Just 19 of around 1k public responses identified busking locations in Spurtleshire. Perhaps traffic noise here renders street entertainment impossible, or perhaps we're either just too busy to pause or too philistine to care.



Image: OnBeyondZebrax (CC BY-SA 4.0).

## Briefly



Image: David Iliff. CC BY-SA 3.0"

Residents are breathing more easily after officials consented their application to fell a 'lofty' and 'non-native' eucalyptus tree in the front garden of **43 Spey Ter**. Locals had complained about views (of what or by whom wasn't clear) and said they would rather grow an easily maintained hedge.

**Edinburgh Street Food** has lost its appeal to the Scottish Govt to retain exterior neon-lit signage in **Greenside PI**. The unsightly pink obstruction appeared, without planning permission, in Feb 2023 [bit.ly/No327p3] and was later refused consent in April (bit.ly/No328p1). **ESF lodged an appeal** in July which was dismissed in late Sept. The Reporter described the signage as 'clutter' and 'haphazard' with an **adverse effect** on local amenity in a conservation area. He agreed with the Council that its **obstruction of tactile paving** constituted a danger to pedestrians, particularly those with impaired vision. If only ESF had sought advice and planning permission **before proceeding**, it could have saved itself much inconvenience and expense.

The **Ambassador Theatre Group** has taken over part of the original 1929 cinema complex adjacent to the Playhouse on **Greenside PI**. It plans to reopen it as a bar for use by theatregoers and undramatically minded members of the public alike.

Local resident and former Edinburgh Makar Stewart Conn has donated a manuscript by **Siegfried Sassoon** to Napier University. Sassoon wrote '**Glory of Women**' while being treated for shell shock at Craiglockhart Hospital here in 1917. He gave it to fellow poet and patient **Wilfred Owen**, from whom it was passed down between generations of admirers until Conn's friend the dramatist **Stephen MacDonald** bequeathed it to him in 2009. Conn says, 'I hope it will be seen as a fitting addition to Edinburgh Napier's **War Poets Collection**, where it can remain on public display rather than gather dust in a vault; and like to think of this as enabling its proper "homecoming".'

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will be at 6pm on 8 Nov in McDonald Rd Library. **Christine Stevenson** will talk about *The Royal Mile*.

Balfour St's **Tracy Griffen** did not return victorious from the **30th Annual Golden Spurtle World Porridge Making Championship** in Carrbridge last month. However, she was pleased that judges highly commended her **pan-fried flapjack**.

Glass and paper recycling banks outside Tesco on **Broughton Rd** have been removed. Council officials said the **difficulty and danger** of reversing lorries out of the site meant they should not. In the short term, they recommend people use glass bins on **Eyre PI** instead.

## Long nights of Stygian gloom

*From the Edinburgh Evening News, 22 October 1896.*

WHEN the Broughton Ward ratepayers are about it, perhaps they might ask their representatives a few questions as to the lighting of the locality. After nightfall it is as sombre a quarter as Edinburgh has, taking into account the size of the streets and the traffic on them.

Picardy Place, for example, is a scene of gloom it would be hard to beat outside the realms below. The straggling beams of the street lamps only serve to make darkness visible. The pedestrian who ventures across at night puts his life in jeopardy from cabs which cut round the corners from the Theatre or Leith Walk.

Then who is responsible for the road down to Bonnington? It is true that a partial reform has been executed on the execrable pavement. One has not now to step off the eighteen inches of footpath into a sea of mud whenever one meets a pedestrian from the other direction—at least if one knows which side of the road boasts the pavement. Considering the traffic on the road, its state is discreditable, even after semi-paving.

Something may be heard, too, about the city white elephant—the Powderhall Destructor.

Altogether, the representatives of the ward have had such a slumbrous time of it that a little lively "heckling" will do them good. [See also [bit.ly/Psygeog](http://bit.ly/Psygeog)]



## New blooms on Broughton Street

Dunbar-born Ellen Wilson's connection to Broughton began as a student at Edinburgh College of Art in 2009 when she rented a flat in E Claremont St: coincidentally, the same building her grandmother lived in as a student while at the same institution years before.

After time as a freelance illustrator, Ellen relaunched as a florist in her home town in 2015, then transferred to a wedding and events business where she helped provide flowers for Andy Murray, J.K. Rowling and David Beckham among others. After spells at Stockbridge's Golden Hare Books and Rose & Ammi in Tollcross, she saw Narcissus' demise as a sad loss but creative opportunity.

Ellen admired Narcissus' national success but doesn't seek to repeat it. She is content with an active street presence engaging with locals. At Broughton St Flowers, she aims to offer 'seasonal, natural, beautiful and (whenever possible) locally sourced' blooms, delivered with an expert but relaxed and friendly style of service.

Customers will enjoy her company at the shop and, if favoured, that of a reclusive whippet called Sunday.



# Moreover ...

At around 8pm on 6 Oct, a woman was subjected to a serious sexual assault in the **St James Qtr**. On 9 Oct, a 16-year-old boy was arrested and charged with the offence. Given the recent frequency of serious criminality in **Edinburgh's East End**, some residents are dismayed at how little meaningful explanation and analysis is provided by Police to the New Town & Broughton Community Council.

**Leith Central Community Council** recently wrote to Edinburgh Council suggesting six simple ways to **improve local planning democracy**. We summarise their points at [bit.ly/sixsways].

The **Great King St Assoc** is keen to better understand the Govt's net-zero policies and how/if they can be applied to **historic properties**. It recommends reading this [bit.ly/armandaleg] and will organise a 'teach-in' by **Historic Environment Scotland** and experts on insulation and relevant local planning rules and Holyrood/Westminster legislation.

New Town & Broughton Community Council submitted a **Freedom of Information** request to Edinburgh Council in July, asking for detailed design specifications of the **Picardy PI Fantasy Island**. It has still not received them. The *FoI Act 2000* requires that a response be provided within 40 working days of receiving a request. **Who is dragging their heels ... and why?**

P3 pupils at **Broughton Primary School** last month harvested their own tomatoes, chopped, roasted, and sieved them to make a **tasty tomato soup**. 'We then all tried the soup if we wanted to.' There may have been leftovers.

Feshiebridge Ltd's effort to turn the office at **1/1A Abercromby PI** (most recently Dunpark Property Agents) into a 5-flat, 7-bdrm **aparthotel** has been refused by officials. They said it had potential to adversely affect neighbours through **noise and disruption**. Three people had objected.

**Beautiful new bin-hubs** will be installed across the N1 controlled parking zone (Hillside and Broughton) between mid-October and mid-2024. To find out **where yours is going**, look out for yellow BBs and white FBHs sprayed on kerbs.

A 2.4m high security fence and window bars are among proposals for the soon-to-be Italy House at **20-22 E London St**. We deplore the absence of *fossa, sepes, lilia, cippi* and *agger* [bit.ly/298p3].

After a Council change of heart, all residents in the **Shaw's colonies** will now be allowed to purchase parking permits even if their properties do not front onto a street. Elsewhere in the area, there are calls for double-yellow lines on **Spey St Lane** due to parking by guests from a nearby hotel blocking businesses. The businesses themselves could apply for **special permits**.

**Correction.** *Spurtle* regrets to report that, in our account of birds viewed on Calton Hill in Sept (Issue 333), we omitted to mention a **blackbird and jackdaw**. Had they been included in our previous calculation of observed species' **combined weight**, the total would have been 6.63 kg: roughly equivalent to that of a Bolivian red howler monkey. We apologise for any confusion.

**Spurtle Team:** E. Dickie, J. Dickie, C. Ellis, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, S. Michael, M. Orr, W. Quinn, C. Roussot, E. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith.

**Post:** Broughton Spurtle, c/o The Yard, 61-3 Broughton Street, EH1 3RJ.

**Printed by** Minuteman Press, Dunfermline.



For a cleaner, safer, more beautiful Calton Hill  
~ please use the QR code to join:

## The Friends of Calton Hill

### LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

A forum for local people who want to engage with and work for their local community.



Leith Central Community Council

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, Mon. 20 November, Nelson Hall, McDonald Road Library.

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

### Foysoil Choudhury MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region



As your Lothian MSP I want to listen, take action and make a lasting difference.

I hold regular advice surgeries for constituents to raise any issue directly, to book an appointment please contact me:

0131 348 6761

Foysoil.Choudhury.MSP@parliament.scot

@FoysoilChoudhuryMSP

@FoysoilChoudhury

foysolchoudhury.co.uk

FOYSOIL CHAUDHURY AND OTHER THE POLITICAL PARTY, 2020-2024. THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT, 2016-2024.

### Lorna Slater MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region



Lorna.Slater.MSP@Parliament.scot

0131 348 6997

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

@LornaSlater

The costs of this publication have been met from parliamentary resources. The SPCB is not responsible for the content of external websites.

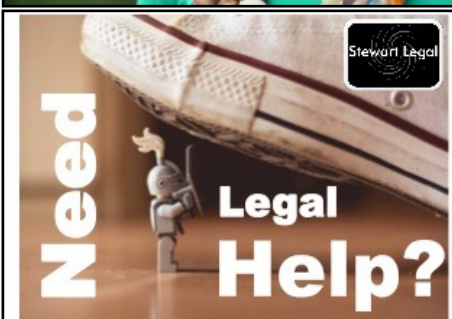
SCOTTISH ARCHITECTURE / GARDEN HISTORY LECTURE

### POST-WAR DESIGNED LANDSCAPES

Monday 13 Nov 18:30  
full info: [bit.ly/AHSSlectures](http://bit.ly/AHSSlectures)



Winter lecture series at Augustine United Church, George IV Bridge, and on-line Bookings via Eventbrite or pay at door



Stewart Legal

# Need Legal Help?

**Clear. Direct. Expert advice.**

If you need advice from a local Scottish solicitor on

- Personal injury claims (100% no win, no fee)
- Employment law and Tribunal advice
- Civil litigation & Dispute resolution
- Property, landlord & tenant issues
- Debt recovery matters

Call us for a free initial consultation  
0131 235 2426

[www.stewartlegal.co.uk](http://www.stewartlegal.co.uk)

Stewart Legal, Hudson House

8 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QB

### Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



"I am here to help and serve all constituents in Edinburgh Northern & Leith. If you need assistance, 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**

**first Friday of every month**

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

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

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](https://www.facebook.com/BenMacpherson) [BenMacSNP](https://www.facebook.com/BenMacSNP) [BenMac](https://www.facebook.com/BenMac) [www.benmacpherson.scot](http://www.benmacpherson.scot)

The costs of this publication have been met from parliamentary resources. The SPCB is not responsible for the content of external websites.