

Spurttle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

REFUSAL FOR SQUARE PEG IN ROUND HOLE

Nearby residents have welcomed the Council's refusal of planning consent for what officials described as an 'incongruous' 4-storey development of 9 flats and ground-floor office space (23/06328/FUL). Dogma Square Properties proposed squeezing the building into a car park between Canonmills, Munro Pl and Boat Green [bit.ly/toowee].

As first reported here in Nov 2023 [bit.ly/dogsq], the application attracted considerable opposition. There were 69 letters of objection and not one of support. Reasons for refusal included:

- negative impact on the conservation area's character due to size, height, form and positioning, with a similar effect for neighbours
- detrimental impact on neighbours' and future occupants' amenity (e.g. overlooking and loss of daylight)
- site not allocated for housing
- site at serious risk of flooding
- design inadequate to cope with such flooding (e.g. safe ingress and exit).



This is so comprehensive a dismantling of the proposal that any appeal seems improbable.

One of DSP's 3 listed directors, Nicholas Stewart, is also a listed director of Glovart Investments Ltd, the company which developed new housing and retail space at 1-6 Canonmills Bridge. One of 3 listed GI directors, James Stewart, is listed as a director of Canon Apartments Ltd, which has been dormant since 2014.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH ... IF YOU CAN

Edinburgh's Low Emission Zone came into effect on 1 June [bit.ly/EdLEZ].

The New Town & Broughton Community Council is concerned that only very limited additional monitoring of displaced traffic volumes and related air pollution around the boundaries of the LEZ is planned. There are vague hopes that additional funds to improve this situation may be found from within the City Mobility Plan budget.

NTBCC also understands the Council lacks up-to-date data on how many non-compliant vehicles currently use Edinburgh roads. Meanwhile, nationwide financial support schemes apply to businesses not private individuals seeking to retrofit vehicles.

It remains to be seen if 4-wheeled libertarians will make good their threat and take direct action against LEZ infrastructure. As seen on p.3 of this issue, motorists tend to fume at curbs on their emissions.

INTO THE WIDE BLUE YONDER

It was in 1994 that Out of the Blue sprang without warning onto the Edinburgh arts scene. Since that arrival on Blackfriars St, it has grown and spread and diversified, and as it now celebrates 30 years on the scene over 2m people have crossed its various thresholds across the city.

OoB manages 6 venues in the capital, its hybrid model hosting studios, workshops, participatory education, social enterprise, exhibitions, creativity, crafts, performance, rehearsals, theatre, screen printing and community development. That list will expand as the organisation continues developing in innovative and hospitable ways.

For *Spurttle* readers, OoB's obvious local presences have been, since 2003, at the A-listed former drill hall on Dalmeny St (where over 100k people now visit each year) and, since 2017, the Abbeymount Studios at our end of Easter Rd. Between them, they host 3 of OoB's 4 enterprises: the cafe, print studio, and craft studios. (The 4th, the Bongo Club, caters for musical troglodytes under the Central Library.)

At least these strengths explain OoB's success: a voracious enthusiasm for creative and community participation; an imaginative and flexible sense of its own possibilities; a pragmatic sense of what is achievable coupled with effective business management. That combination should guide arts organisations – large and small – much further afield.—AM [See also Charlie Ellis on 1 June at bit.ly/SpBrkNws]

THE FAST AND THE HAPLESS



Edinburgh drivers' fascination for demolishing Spurtleshire iron and stonework continues unabated. On the afternoon of 29 April, a startled reader reported a black saloon perched halfway over the basement at 21a Albany St with 3 panda cars in attendance. Steps and railings were damaged. The driver was charged with a traffic offence. Next, at 6.30am on 11 May, a different saloon sped into the forecourt of Canonmills service station, swerved and sped out again through the boundary wall. It was unable to proceed afterwards. Nobody was hurt. Police arrived and deployed more of their now fast-winding supply of incident tape.

HIGH HOPES FOR NEW CONSERVATION TRUST



At its first Annual General Meeting on 18 May, the Friends of Calton Hill voted to apply to the Scottish Charity Regulator to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This is the model successfully operated by the Water of Leith Conservation Trust.

If accepted, the new Calton Hill Conservation Trust would aim to: (1) promote and encourage the conservation, preservation, protection and improvement of the area; (2) inform the public of the area's significance, its history and environment, and its future sustainability, with the intention of encouraging a responsible attitude towards amenity and attractions there; (3) promote and encourage enjoyment and responsible use of the area by a wide range of people and organisations, including those who live and work locally.

The Trust would also hope to access more funding than is currently available via subscriptions and Edinburgh Council's financial and in-kind support.

Briefly



Broughton Flowers on **Broughton St** will mark British Flower Week with evening workshops on 6 and 7 June (6.30–8.00pm). Arrangements of flowers from **Edinburgh, Perthshire and E Lothian growers** will be aided by champagne and cakes. Places are limited and, as we went to press, were going fast. Fear not ... **further monthly workshops** will follow, provisionally themed around illustration, photography, book launches and bookbinding. **Contact the shop for details.**

We hear neighbours are concerned about **possible noise** from proposed refrigeration plant behind the new Marks & Spencer on **Raeburn Pl**. Some have commissioned a private report.

Consent has been granted for the owners of a B-listed flat at **1 Brandon St** to make internal alterations and change the colour of their front door. Given recent controversies about paint choices in the **New Town**, *Spartle* awaited the decision with interest. Happily, Planners found the switch from some kind of dreary curdled buttercream to an altogether cheerier satin-finish **Valspar Weathervane** (grey) was acceptable.

For **E London St**, Council officers are considering refurbishment of speed bumps, the cost and citywide priority of widening pavements, and removal of CPZ parking spaces outside the playground of **St Mary's RC Primary School**. Changes to kerb lines or removal of parking would require a revision to the traffic regulation order.



Opinions differ about a proposed 5-bdrm house on **Blenheim Pl**. Some like its modern appearance at the back. Others loath its blank face at the front. Is it a welcome use of space or an awkward companion for the church next-door? And what about views across **Greenside**? See [bit.ly/BPviews].

GTS Solutions CIC has applied for a change of use at **1 Gayfield Sq** to include Sui Generis (dual use to that as already approved). The plot re-thickens.

What looks like a recently restored double-bench has appeared for the first time at the former bowling-green end of **St Mark's Path**. It is: 'For Maisie Mulholland, champion bowler, 1911–1999. From her loving family.'

Although the internal fitting-out of commercial property at **1–6 Canonmills Bridge** still appears a work in progress, there are signs that Impress orthodontic services are at long last about to start.

Gayfield Association relaunch

The Gayfield Association has been revived with the aim of fostering community spirit and enhancing and protecting all aspects of the area's built and natural environments.

The group will work with Parks and Edinburgh Conservation Volunteers to improve green spaces, especially Gayfield Sq Gardens, and will coordinate efforts with other local amenity associations, community council and heritage watchdogs.

The Association aims to build the community through 'consultation, conversation, social events and participation in "green days"'.
The next of these takes place on 1 June in the Gardens (12.00–2.00pm), with subsequent ones and other news to be publicised via local noticeboards and a dedicated WhatsApp group.



Too much and in the way

Two Licensing issues arose at last month's meeting of the New Town & Broughton Community Council. The first concerned NTBCC's response to the Council's supplementary consultation on areas of overprovision (of alcohol licences).

NTBCC says these should be retained in the Old Town, Princes St, Leith St, Tollcross, Dean Village, Southside, Canongate and Dumbiedykes, and extended to include Leith and Leith Walk. It argues that the presumption against granting licences to businesses which don't offer overnight accommodation leads to better management of them and generally better behaviour by customers on leaving the premises. This is particularly important in densely populated parts of the city.

The second issue was about premises seeking to add an outdoor area to their licensed footprint. Where the area concerned already benefits from an Outdoor Tables & Chairs permit (granted by the Roads Authority), the Licensing Board is left with narrow grounds to refuse.

Outdoor hospitality can lead to some crucial loss of pedestrian space on footways, for example on that recently widened section of Leith St outside The Newsroom. The granting of a Tables & Chairs permit here has increased crowding and the risk of people being forced onto the carriageway.



This was evident on the evening of 30 Apr, when the queues formed down Leith St to access Beltane celebrations forced everyone else onto the road.

NTBCC envisages similar problems once the George St transformation is finished and is calling for more joined-up thinking from officials and elected members to address the issue.

Sinister turn returns

Elected members on the Transport & Environment Cmte last month voted to reinstate a left turn for motor traffic into London Rd from Leith Walk.

Removal of that option after the Trams to Newhaven extension became active this time last year was intended to avoid the over-saturation of traffic which was predicted to follow introduction of an uninterrupted single-phase crossing here for pedestrians and cyclists.

But the consequent congestion on Leith St, Picardy Pl and Broughton St caused unacceptable delays, not least for public transport. Locals also reported impatient and sometimes dangerous driver responses, and a choking build-up of traffic fumes as far north as Mansfield Pl.



That experiment has now ceased, with officials preferring an alternative whereby there will be a minimum of 10 secs for traffic to use the left turn, and a single-phase cycle and pedestrian crossing across London Rd when traffic is only allowed to continue along Leith Walk. No negative effects on southbound buses at Elm Row are envisaged. The overall time for both stages will 'be the same as currently operating for the ahead only and pedestrian stage'.

Let's hope the solution is clearer in operation than in explanation. Following approval of the plan, a statutory process to make the changes has begun under the Trams to Newhaven Temporary Traffic Regulation Order.

Tiptoes, no tulips

Those Friends of Calton Hill who followed botanist Ben Averis into the bushes last month were delighted to find themselves alphabetically skirting: annual meadow grass, ash, bluebell, (hybrid) broad buckler fern, broom, butter fern, cherry, chickweed, common sorrel, common whitlow grass, couch grass, cow, parsley, common nettle, creeping buttercup, dandelion, dog rose, feverfuge, field buttercup, field maple, foxglove and gorse.

Not only that but: green alkanet, hawthorn, herb robert, hazel, hogweed, hedge bedstraw, holly (native and hybrid), horse chestnut, miner's lettuce, moss pearlwort, napweed, Norway maple, pennywort, perennial rye grass, piggyback plant, ragwort, raspberry, red campion, rosebay willowherb, ribwort plantain, rowan, sheep sorrel, silver birch, speedwell and spelt.

Swedish whitebeam followed, as did: sycamore, thistle, wallflower, wall lettuce, wavy bittercress, whitebeam, white clover, wood aven, wych elm and yarrow.

Another expedition through the lesser-known lyrics of Simon and Garfunkel is scheduled for July.



Briefly



The neighbouring Council-owned premises at **2–6 Calton Rd** (The Bunker) and **43 Leith St** (The Black Bull) have been leased for a period of 20 years to Edinburgh-based **The Mother Black Cat Ltd**. After an initial 3-month rent-free period, the combined rent will be £105k per year, £18k more than before. One of 5 bidders for the lease, MBC already runs The Black Cat bar on **Rose St**.

For the next 2 years or so, during work to refurbish the **Jenner's building**, Airport Buses will once again depart from **Waverley Bridge**.

The Development Management Sub-Cmte last month allowed the firm building 42 new homes on **Henderson PI Lane** not to construct the 10 on-site affordable houses stipulated as a **condition of the original planning consent** (22/04326/FUL). Instead, the developer will pay Edinburgh Council a commuted sum of £593.25k as a contribution towards building **10 affordable units elsewhere**. The reason offered by the developer was that, owing to current inflation, the construction cost of each unit would **exceed £230k**, a figure beyond the **threshold of viability** for a Registered Social Landlord.

Friends of Pilrig Park invite volunteers to help litter-pick on 15 June, 10.30–11.30am. Meet at the **Balfour St** entrance. A Community Picnic here is scheduled for 22 June (time TBC) with an alternative date set 1 week later in case of bad weather. Fortunately, rain is rare in Pilrig.

Owing to increased workload and reduced number of staff, the Council's **Road Safety Service** has struggled to deliver expected projects on time in recent months. The promised new pedestrian crossing at the **Drummond PI end of London St** – first agreed in 2012 – seems to have yet again slipped off the priorities list and shows no sign of reappearing. There's better news on refreshing of road markings at **Bellevue and E Claremont St, and E Claremont St and environs** (estimated £10k) where work should take place in 2024/25. Uncontrolled crossing buildouts to 'improve and reduce radii' at **Dublin St/Abercromby PI/Albany St** (£200k) are scheduled for 2025/26. Recruitment began earlier this year to increase the number of staff from 3 or 4 to 8.

Last month, Edinburgh Council awarded its **Winter Festivals contract** to a consortium of Unique Assembly Ltd, Assembly Festival Ltd and Unique Events Ltd. It will run for an **initial period of 3 years**, with 2 optional 12-month extensions. The contract is estimated to be worth **£405k–£1.5m**, subject to planning permission, licensing and site availability. Meanwhile, GC Live – an unsuccessful bidder for the same contract – has threatened legal action in the **Court of Session**, saying the tender process was flawed and unfair. Council officers rebut the claims.

Fe²O³ too bad for trees

Work has begun on relocating iron planters along the route of the northern tram extension to parks and bowling greens elsewhere in the city (St Mark's and Inverleith Parks included). The move comes after hostile local responses and unprecedented levels of vandalism.

SFN, the main contractor for the Trams to Newhaven Project, positioned the 'rusty buckets' as part of a statutory requirement to plant two trees for every one which had been removed during construction. Planters for small trees were chosen in locations where underground infrastructure restricted possibilities.

But to many they seemed ugly and incongruous afterthoughts plonked on the street with little thought for aesthetics, practicality or maintenance. Of 46 trees placed in them, 16 (35%) were promptly snapped. Nearly all went unwatered, nurtured instead in a non-standard medium of fag ends, chip wrappers and old rubber johnnies. *Rus in urbe* it wasn't. The buckets themselves attracted graffiti and billposting and seemed to say more about post-industrial decay than transformation of the area into an inspiring leaf-softened boulevard.

Exact relocation spots have yet to be confirmed, but a few may yet remain if competent locals commit to caring for them. Some sceptics say the planters are not suitable even for small trees, but others welcome the idea of using them elsewhere as waist-high mini-allotments.

Meanwhile, STF will consider alternative locations for sturdier specimens, particularly along the Spurtleshire end of the route. Here, a tree and 10 bushes appeared in Elm Row last month, but who put them there is unclear.



Motor news—Exhaust fumes

From the Scotsman, 1 August 1933.

Members of the medical profession discussed many aspects of modern motoring relating to the general health of the community as a whole, including drivers, at the meeting of the British Medical Association last week.

In regard to the effects of exhaust fumes on road users of all classes, and the prediction that if this form of gas attack is intensified all frequenters of the public highways may require to wear gas masks, one may be permitted to suggest that probability has perhaps been stretched to a wider point than the circumstances are likely to warrant.

Obviously, it would be the duty of those in authority to deal with any serious menace to the health of the community long before it became necessary to wear gas masks, and if the choice lay between wearing gas masks or banishing motor vehicles from the congested streets of our cities, it may be assumed that the latter course would be authorised.

As a matter of fact, it is not the first time a scare of this description has been spread. When petrol containing tetra-ethyl lead was first introduced in this country the same allegations of mass-poisoning were spread. The report of a Royal Commission effectively disposed of the allegations.

It is not suggested by the writer that the cases of tetra-ethyl lead fuel and the carbon-monoxide which comes out of the exhaust pipes are analogous. We know that the latter is a deadly poison; but it shows how unfounded a scare may be. It still remains to be proved that 'the permeation of the atmosphere with these gases is accountable for an unestimated annual rise in the death-rate.'



Image: H.R. Millar, Punch, 06.06.1906.

Moreover ...



A new and improved community-library box has appeared at the foot of **Scotland St**, curated by Broughton's Maria Wakely and built by David Woodside of Stockbridge. It is a **thing of beauty, not least for the nose**: warm varnish, perfect bindings, fresh Spurtles.

The workshop of tinsmiths, chandelier repairers and lantern makers Lonsdale & Dutch at **23b Howe St** is to become a specialist edodontist practice called **Saving Teeth**. The former incumbents established the business here in 1921, but the premises had already been used as a **sheet metal workshop** since the 1860s. For an interesting history, visit [bit.ly/tinlant]. *Spurtle* has contacted L&D for an update on the business and its **future location**.

Glenprop LLP has issued a revised proposal of application notice for purpose-built student accommodation at 14 Ashley Pl (off Newhaven Rd and just out of Spurtleshire). More news when we have it.

Local resident **Srishti Bakshi's WOMB: Women of My Billion** is available to view on Amazon Prime. Following her 3.8k km journey from **Kanyakumari to Kathmandu**, it is billed as 'a poignant documentary showcasing the struggles, aspirations, and resilience of Indian women, united against violence and patriarchy'. It comes highly recommended by 3 *Spurtle* readers who have seen it already.

The application to build a guesthouse annexe at **36 Pilrig St**, with access via Spey St Lane, has been refused. There had been 25 objections.

Temporary loos are coming to **Inverleith Pk** in June. Permanent ones, with remotely lockable doors, will be installed near the depot gates at the end of the summer. If you're remotely concerned about getting shut in, we suggest you carry a mobile.

Many of those admirers of natural phenomena who gathered on **Calton Hill** last month to see the aurora borealis arrived in **at least 93 private cars**, the headlights of which made seeing anything other than other motorists **nigh-on impossible**. When drivers and pedestrians finally escaped the ensuing traffic jam, they left behind **wonderful, multicoloured and undulating drifts** of discarded food and drink packaging which no-one could miss in the morning. Talks have since resumed between **commercial operators on the Hill and Council officials** about current unrestricted vehicle access to the top.

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Leith Central Community Council

LCCC seeks local people to take key roles as Vice-Chair and Engagement Officer. Guidance on offer from experienced members. Next meeting at 7pm on 17 June in McDonald Road Library.

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

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As the local MSP for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency my team and I are here to help.

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