

# Spurtle



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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER** Free

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**Tel: 07455 770474**

**spurtle@hotmail.co.uk**

## SOFTLY, SOFTLY FOR SELFISH CYCLISTS ... AT FIRST

Police Scotland will mount an education-and-awareness day of action for cyclists at city-centre locations on 19 July.

The initiative responds to widespread public concerns about a minority of cyclists' excessive speed and use of non-shared footways.

Community officers from across Edinburgh will focus on 'engagement' in the first instance, offering friendly advice and distributing 'rules-of-the-road' information via Zoomo on Leith Walk, a business from which many couriers rent e-bikes. If there is no improvement, a social-media campaign is also promised. Increased enforcement measures will follow after that.

When spotted, riders committing serious traffic offences will, as always, be ticketed pronto. The law requiring road insurance for users of modified e-bikes capable of assisted speeds above 15mph will be applied. At present, there are no plans to follow City of London Police's example by confiscating such non-compliant vehicles.



## CITY TREES – IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE



*La France is a foreign country, they do things differently there. Spurtle's Europe correspondent sent us this photo last month, taken on the Rue de la République in Avignon.*

*It shows one of many non-rusting planters on both sides of the road containing unvandalised flowers, no litter and a variety of flowering trees.*

*The kind and timing of vehicle road traffic is strictly regulated. All vehicles are prevented from parking on the footway by bollards, and cycle parking is provided at convenient intervals along the way.*

*'I have seen the future of Leith Walk,' writes our correspondent, 'and it blooms.'*

## GIGANTIC REPLACEMENT FOR POSITIVE DISPLACEMENT



Image courtesy of Scottish Water.

Upgrading and refurbishment of the McDonald Rd Waste Water Pumping Station has taken a major twist forward with installation of a huge Archimedean screw. Its 50-year-old predecessor was removed in Dec 2023.

Lowered into position beneath Broughton Primary School's car park, the replacement (with help from the canalised Broughton Burn) will lift millions of Edinburgh jobbies and pees to a larger sewer which then runs by gravity to Seafield.

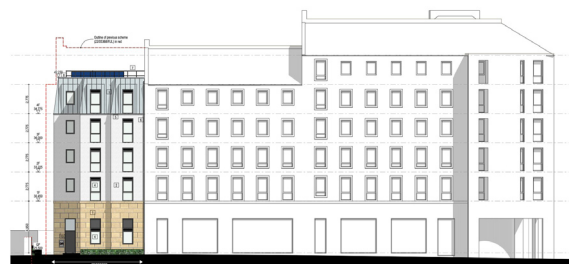
As its name suggests, the new 'Storm Screw' is designed to function at times of high flow, caused by heavy rainfall not Christmas dinners. At 16 tonnes, it weighs as much as 10 mature hippopotamus bulls and, at 14m long, matches the largest ever reliably recorded extent of a colossal squid. Neither of those species has proved practical for sewerage purposes in the past.

Later this year, a smaller 'Foul Screw' replacement will be installed to manage day-to-day poos on the move.

Scottish Water's waste water operations manager Steven Boon commented, 'The successful installation of the screw pump marks a pivotal achievement in the project's timeline, reflecting the dedication and hard work of the team.' SW chief executive Alex Plant was present during the complex operation to offer encouragement.

If all goes well, work on the £3.2m McDonald Rd scheme is expected to conclude this winter.

## SHRUB HOUSE MAY GROW TO HOUSE MORE STUDENTS



Unite Group PLC proposes a 5-storey extension to the side of Shrub House on Middlefield for 20 purpose-built studio flats with kitchenettes and en suites (24/02439/FUL). No additional parking spaces feature.

Two previous extensions have been proposed for this site, one of which was approved in 2016 but not built, the other of which was refused in 2022 due – among other reasons – to its unacceptable reduction of daylight levels in the Engine Yard complex next-door.

Unite says that reducing the height of the extension by 1 floor now means the number of nearby windows negatively affected drops from 10 to 4, all of which fall below current Average Daylight Factor standards and did so even when first built.

Leith Central Community Council objected on numerous grounds to the 2022 application, including its addition to an already excessive concentration of student housing on Leith Walk. It also suggested piecemeal development of sites such as Shrub House could in theory allow unscrupulous developers to avoid providing a proportion of non-student housing.



# Briefly



Tables and chairs on the footway outside the Newsroom on **Leith St** continue to cause congestion for pedestrians and frequent incursions by them onto the road (Issue 340). We understand **Transport & Environment** and **Licensing Board** conveners are 'committed to engage' on the subject, but whether they body-swerve or collide remains to be seen.

As *Spurtle* went to press, **36 objections** had been lodged regarding GTS Solutions CIC's widely mistrusted application for change of use at **1 Gayfield Sq**. A determination is expected by 8 July.

*Spurtle's* **General Election hustings** took place on 24 June, just too late for the event to be reported in this print edition. For coverage, see instead **Jaundiced of Claremont's report** at [bit.ly/SpBrkNws]. Having thought long and hard about the likely result in **Edinburgh North & Leith**, our pundits agree the next MP here will probably be one of: Andersen (**LibDem**); Brock (**SNP**); Deepnarain (**Scottish Family**); Gilbert (**Labour**); Jacobsen (**Socialist Labour**); Melville (**Reform**); Mowat (**Conservative**); O'Neill (**Green**); Shillcock (**Communist**); Waterloo (**Indep**).

A driver has been charged and is being reported to the **Procurator Fiscal** for causing an obstruction and associated disruption to the tram network in **Leith**. Police remind drivers to park responsibly and obey **parking signage and regulations**.

The Jolly Restaurant at **9 Elm Row** has been given the go-ahead to install bifold doors on its frontage. The **Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland** had earlier objected, saying this was a wasted opportunity to match the A-listed building's appearance to that of other historic shop fronts nearby in the Conservation Area.

Shapes, colours, inventive play, storytelling and LEGO® bricks feature in an interactive experience at **the Botanics** this summer. Play with Plants runs daily from 10.15am to 4.15pm until 1 Sept. **Hour-long play slots** are bookable at [bit.ly/ogel].

A recent **expert study** found no evidence of bats or otters living within the development boundary of Black Rock's site at **20 Brandon St**. Nor were suitable habitats identified for great crested newts, water voles, red squirrels, pine martins and wildcats. **This is disappointing**. Instead, capitalist yetis, red in tooth and claw, will likely flourish here in the years to come, affording locals great opportunities to observe **feeding and mating behaviours** at close quarters.

The **Broughton Hotel's plans** to upgrade interior and exterior features at B-listed **37 Broughton PI** have been approved despite 8 objections. The **Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland** criticised changing room proportions and, like others, said that outside wall attachments and lighting would spoil the building itself and the Conservation Area in which it lies.

## Short-term exemptions for (some) short-term lets

NTBCC's Licensing Convener Annick Gaillard explains that, in response to concerns about availability and price of STL accommodation during the Aug festival season, Edinburgh Council is trialling a simplified process for home-letting and home-sharing licences.

Temporary exemptions will grant applications subject to any conditions the Council opts to attach. There is no public consultation, only consultation with the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer, and there is no right to object to an exemption.

In related news, NTBCC notes that running a short-term let without a licence is punishable by an initial £2.5k fine and even a criminal conviction. Criminal conviction would mean the guilty party could not apply for a licence later.

However, there is anecdotal evidence that some operators are prepared to take that risk. Given that legitimate STLs must meet standards on, for example, fire escapes, safety and number of residents, NTBCC is pressing the Council to take action against any unlawful individuals or companies.

## Right building, wrong place

The New Town & Broughton Community Council has objected to the proposal for a 5-bdrm house on Blenheim Pl (see Issue 339 and bit.ly/BPviews). It argues that:

- the site is not 'disused land', as claimed, but historic woodland consistent with the architect Thomas Playfair's original plan for Calton
- the proposal's south-facing side would spoil the privacy and amenity of its A-listed residential neighbour
- the featureless Blenheim Pl elevation does not respect the historic building line of the street and would likely become an attractive 'canvas for graffiti artists'
- views to Calton Hill which form part of the UNESCO world-heritage designation would be lost
- building on open space here would result in increased rain run-off down a steep setted carriageway.

In words which may please the developer, and architect Richard Murphy, NTBCC describes the proposal as 'innovative and elegant'. In words which won't please them, NTBCC concludes, 'In summary, there is no doubt that this has been a carefully considered application in terms of its appearance. However, NTBCC is unable to support it at this proposed location.'



## Out where a friend is a friend

Anyone interested in unobstructed views of a velocipede's moving parts will be pleased to learn that the World Naked Bike Ride returns to Edinburgh on Sat 6 July.

Participants, in various states of undress, will gather on Middle Meadow Walk at 1pm and depart at 2pm for a 3-hour tour of the capital.

According to the WNBR website, the event is about protesting against oil dependency and 'celebrating the power and individuality of our bodies.'

'WNBR is highly infectious. Its message and image have immediate widespread appeal. It operates on a simple, scaleable model, relies on grassroots promotion, and integrates easily into collaborative projects and interests in the vast majority of progressive communities across the globe.'

WNBR Edinburgh says public nakedness is not an offence in Scotland but advises members not to 'do anything to harass, alarm or distress people, and nothing you wouldn't do clothed'. We advise sensitive souls on the 6th to avoid setted streets in the city centre.



Image: Slaunger [bit.ly/autry].

## Odd dents. What is it?

A 1968 classic appeared on McDonald Rd last month. Regular contributors to the *Spurtle* were clueless. Reader David McIntosh offers the following analysis.

'This is a great spot and fairly rare, especially in Scotland. It's a Land Rover Series IIB Forward Control model. It was introduced in late 1966 to replace the IIA Forward Control.

'It had a number of improvements over the earlier model, including the option of a 2.6 litre, 6 cylinder petrol engine to provide more power. It had a unique chassis and a wider and slightly longer wheelbase than the standard 109" models.

'Essentially, it was a small lorry. Many were delivered with breakdown-truck cranes as a factory-fitted option provided by Harvey Frost.' Nailed it.





## Been wet and getting wetter. What next?

When *Spurtle* posted video images online showing local floods in late May, nearly 70k people surged to view them in under 24 hours [bit.ly/22wet]. While grateful for the attention, we noted reader Andrew Heald's response: 'Time for a chat about land-use planning in the Pentlands? Or shall we just share some more photos of the Water of Leith?'

Heald rightly recognises how most of us are more interested in alarming effects than inconvenient prevention of and practical responses to climate change.

These issues were highlighted in a recent application to adapt an A-listed property on Great King St (23/03650/LBC). The owner's proposals included a mansard extension at the back to house an energy-efficient air-source heat pump in the M-shaped roof valley.

Historic Environment Scotland and the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland objected. Edinburgh Council refused consent. On strict planning criteria, a Scottish Govt Reporter later dismissed an appeal, saying alternative roof arrangements were possible and the proposal would detract from the listed building and the character of the Conservation Area (LBA-230-2269).

Whatever the niceties of this particular case, change is coming. And, as Edinburgh World Heritage noted in July 2021, compromises will surely be necessary for historic buildings in unprecedented conditions [bit.ly/No309p4].



## Briefly



**Public and private donations** since Easter have raised £100k towards the Botanic Garden's restoration of **two 19th-century Palm Houses**. The money will help fund sandstone repairs, ironwork restoration and fitting of new, more energy-efficient and robust glass panes. **A further £150k** is sought by 2025.

**The Golden Turd** is up for grabs as Nuveen Real Estate, owner of the St James Qtr, sells its freehold of the full service for it. The 10-storey, 244-bdrm **W Hotel Edinburgh**, which opened in Nov last year, will continue to operate normally during the sale and may well do so afterwards for many years. It is ownership of the *building* not the *business*, part of Marriot International, which is being sold in line with **Nuveen's wider business** plan for the development. A 25% (£250m) stake in the St James Qtr and 154-bdrm New Eidyn development is also on the market.

Nuveen seeks consent for a 150-seat **partially covered event space** with stretch tent, bar and screen on the Level-5 roof of the **St James Qtr** facing Calton Hill, operating 10am–11pm (24/02521/FUL). It plans to match previous amplified noise levels here which did not result in any complaints from neighbours.

**Tai Chi**, led by Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust staff, takes place in **Hopetoun Crescent Gdn** on Fridays, 2.00–3.00pm. For details contact nelly@elgt.or.uk.

Well-kent local councillors **Susan Rae and Chas Booth** (Wards 12 and 13) were last month elected co-conveners of the Scottish Greens in Edinburgh.

City-centre community police officers report increased anti-social behaviour by young people at the **east end of Princes St** and in the **St James Qtr**. They say they work hard to establish relationships with 10–16-year olds visiting the area, and better behaviour follows over time and with growing maturity. And then a **new cohort arrives** and the process starts again. In *Spurtle's* experience, young people gather in these public spaces because **they feel safe and have access to affordable food and clean toilets**. They have every right to be there, even if braisen and bouterous capers are sometimes annoying for everyone else.

Under the terms of an S75 agreement with Edinburgh Council, the **developer of 8 flats on York Lane** (22/00030/FUL) will contribute £6.85k towards educational infrastructure and £23k towards the trams.

**CORRECTION:**—In Issue 340 (p.3), we mistakenly reported that the Development Management Sub-Cmte had on 1 May allowed a developer of 42 new homes on **Henderson PI Lane** not to construct 10 on-site affordable homes. We should have said the DMS refused consent not to build affordable homes. The rejection followed an unusual joint amendment by the Greens and Conservatives.

## Valued history with musical future

New Town & Broughton Community Council supports plans to redevelop the old Royal High School as a National Centre for Music (24/01804/FUL, Issue 339).

It notes that demolition of ancillary buildings on the site will reaffirm the central block's intended prominence, and that reduced interventions will better preserve elements of Thomas Hamilton's design, not least around the portico.

NTBCC welcomes, 'the extent, functionality and aesthetics of the proposed landscaping which should create harmony between the wider natural environment and the built environment as well as providing the potential for animating the space at certain times of the year – for the enjoyment of both Edinburgh residents and visitors. What is proposed will have a positive impact on the setting of the Hamilton building as well as enhancing the character of this part of the Conservation Area.'



## Guides to the city

*Abridged from the Scotsman, 27 April 1860, by AM.*

SIR,—Guides or commissionaires of the right stamp are almost indispensable to strangers visiting cities and places of past historical note, and of world-wide celebrity, and I know of no place where the services of *intelligent, courteous, and honest* guides are more required than in the city of Edinburgh.

The services of such men, well regulated and duly recognised, would be most highly appreciated. But at present there is a mixture of good and evil—precious and vile—which throws discredit on the whole fraternity, and is very injurious to the interests of some of your citizens.

No sooner does a stranger make his or her appearance at the foot of Calton Hill, or other places of tourist resort, than these touters begin to play their dodges, and if once they can gain the ear, the eye, or the tongue of the unsuspecting stranger, like a leech will they retain their hold until "black mail" is secured.

Generally some refreshment is given to them, and not infrequently, after copious libations of whisky and the inhalations of a prodigious amount of snuff, have they blackguarded and abused those placed under their guidance.

And not only do they levy contributions from their stranger victims, but they have also a system of sponging on the proprietors or managers of institutions for a percentage of the money charged for admission, else represent these as not worthy of notice.

In anticipation of the approaching tourist season, I respectfully urge upon the attention of the city authorities, and influential inhabitants, the importance of this subject.

I am, &c., THOMAS COOK.

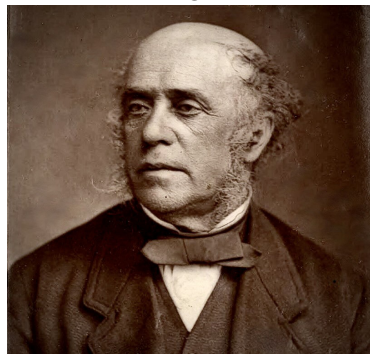


Image: Wikimedia Commons.



# Moreover ...



This Sept, **East London St** resident Alex Brown will join Lloyds Bank Group colleagues on a 5-day trek up Mount Toubkal, the highest peak in Morocco's Atlas Mountains. The point is to raise money for **homelessness charity Crisis**. To support the cause, visit the JustGiving page at [bit.ly/MtTbkl].

Locals report that newly planted saplings on Picardy Pl's **Fantasy Island** are already dying. Despite recent deluges, it seems a lack of regular watering explains their failure to thrive.

Gordon Ramsay's Street Pizza restaurant at **11 Henderson Row** has closed. Insiders tell us the business shut down over Christmas and when it reopened not enough **flocking customers** came back. The property is now being advertised with a passing rent of £25k pa (excl). Offers for all fixtures/fittings and the 15-year FRI lease (expiring in 2037) are invited in the region of £40k.

Positive talks continue between the Council, Network Rail and freight operator about the **Powderhall Railway Line**. All parties seek a mutually agreeable way to obtain independent valuations for **terminating the lease and acquiring the land**. The Council's long-term plan is to create an active travel link, but work to develop concept designs for this are currently on hold. Documents relating to the line, obtained by Leith Central Community Council under a **Freedom of Information** request, are available at [bit.ly/PdRL].

Local resident **Herbert Goodenough** has regularly weeded, hoed and brushed the top end of **Dublin St** for the last 3 years. He's now investigating whether volunteers are interested in taking on other micro-jungly bits of the **eastern New Town**. For details, contact herbertgoodenough@gmail.com.

We were saddened to hear late last month that **Eric Robertson**, resident in Broughton Pl for the last 30 years, has died, aged 94. A longer remembrance of him will follow in due course.

A **5-chair dental practice** with X-ray cubicle will operate soon from former ground-floor office premises at **103 E London St**.

In a curious Planning anomaly (24/01835/CLP), Edinburgh Council will allow the owner of **7 Barony St** to change the property's use from Class 3 (food & drink) to Class 1A ('hops and financial management'). While this is not exactly what the applicant requested, there is no suggestion that he's at all bitter.

Local observers suggest cameras to monitor **Edinburgh's Low Emission Zone** are not yet functioning and the Council's mobile unit **is still to arrive**. They say that while officials claimed fines would be issued after 1 June, there was no clear statement of when. Officials are presumably fuming.

**Spurtle Team:** E. Brown, 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.  
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**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 19 August in McDonald Road Library.**

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

Leith Central Community Council

## Foysoil Choudhury MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region

The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**Contact Me:**

- @FoysoilChoudhuryMSP
- @FoysoilChoudhury
- foysoilchoudhury.co.uk
- foysoil.choudhury.msp@parliament.scot
- 0131 348 6761

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## Lorna Slater MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region

The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**Contact Me:**

- Lorna.Slater.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

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**Phone:**  
0131 600 0134

**Email:**  
ben.macpherson.msp@parliament.scot

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