

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

GLOVES OFF IN OLD ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL FIGHT

Duddingston House Properties and Urbanist Hotels have submitted new applications for a 127-bedroom 'world-class' hotel in and around the old Royal High School at 5-7 Regent Road (Ref. 17/0058/FUL).

Proposals include: change of use; alterations/restoration of the Hamilton building; demolition of ancillary buildings; 2 new accommodation wings; new access, landscaping and public realm improvements; publicly accessible bars and restaurants. They promise an 'exemplar programme of Arts and Culture activities' and major economic benefits at local and national levels.

Their tone is markedly pugnacious towards the New Town & Broughton Community Council, Edinburgh World Heritage, Cockburn Association and City of Edinburgh Council officials and others who successfully opposed a previous application for a bigger scheme. Alleged faults in the already consented music-school plans are also highlighted. See our website (22.2.17).

On 20 Feb, the developers asked the Scottish Government to call in the music-school plans, saying judicial review was needed to address concerns about 'heritage and viability': i.e. the Council's allegedly insufficient attention to underground excavation potentially damaging the listed structure above.

So, the three options for the site *may* be called in for simultaneous determination at Government level. The developers say this would allow 'fair and open' assessment of legal flaws under public scrutiny. Critics say it would effectively bypass the local planning system. The storm brews.



MIXED NEWS ON St ANDREW SQUARE

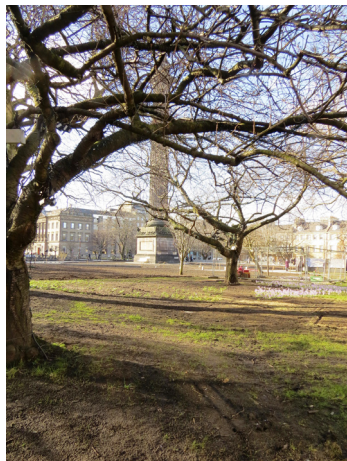
St Andrew Square proprietors who own the Garden in the middle have blocked Fringe events here this summer. The Spiegeltent and other damaging clutter won't feature.

In a confusingly mixed message relayed via sub-lessee Essential Edinburgh (EE), proprietors want to raise the tone and reaffirm the area as a 'space for relaxation' and 'a pleasing interlude'. But they also want to animate it in a way that minimises disruption. Perhaps expect massed cellos and a silent disco.

Infrastructure that damages the Garden will not be allowed. But the mid-winter ice-rink – which causes more damage than anything else – will continue. Discussions between EE and the proprietors continue.

In related news, EE tells us it will not be decompacting soil around ailing trees' roots in the Garden. Although their own independent consultants recommended such urgent action (our website 8.11.16), EE says the £3,000-£4,000 cost would be excessive – that despite the fact that its events here caused the problem and its events are supposed to generate income for Garden maintenance. EE will reassess the issue in 2018. *Spurtle* is extremely unimpressed.

Our recent interview with EE's CEO Roddy Smith and colleagues will appear online soon.



CLIMATE OF CO-OPERATION



Broughton Parish Church hosted Daniel Joaquim, Moderator of the Evangelical Church of Christ in Mozambique (ECCM) over January and February.

Joaquim shadowed the Rev. Graham McGeogh and members of the congregation, taking particular interest in the pastoral care team's work. Broughton's food bank, and the support and guidance offered by local groups to those living with HIV, offered practical examples he plans to adopt back home.

Joaquim also visited Arbroath, Dundee and Glasgow, and preached in Broughton on 12 February. In none of these locations did he find the weather too hot.

Church of Scotland missionaries founded the ECCM in 1913, and links between the two remain strong. Joaquim and Vice Moderator Inacio Somueque (who was also in Edinburgh) have now returned to Mozambique, but not before offering a warm welcome to any Scottish church members who'd like to visit them.

LOCAL GIANTS HEAD WEST

John Lewis has announced plans to close its Bonnington delivery depot in the autumn.

Some 78 local jobs will be affected, although some 'partners' will be offered redeployment to the enlarged Glasgow service centre.

Management says the Bonnington Rd Lane facility (built in 1973) no longer copes efficiently with increased demand.

Deidre Brock MSP described the decision as 'deeply disappointing' and said staff 'deserve more for their loyalty than a P45 ... The Leith depot is a busy hub and it seems daft to me to send trucks from Glasgow to deliver in Edinburgh when we've a perfectly good set-up here'. She has requested more detail from John Lewis, and promised to help locals where she can.

Other locals, alarmed by the growing size and frequency of John Lewis juggernauts on Broughton streets, will not miss the depot quite as much.



Briefly

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will be in Drummond Community High School on 20 Mar at 7pm. Pat Wigston will talk on **Arniston House**, which is 11 miles outside Edinburgh. Hopefully, she has a loud voice and a head for heights.

Sijie Chen (violin) and **Jan Waterfield** (harpsichord) organised and performed two concerts of **Bach and Handel sonatas** at Broughton St Mary's Parish Church in Jan. They raised £833 for **Re-Act, Refugee Action Scotland**, for which they deserve great thanks and much admiration.

Locals reported a **4–5m landslip** on Heriot Hill below Claremont Bank on 23 Feb. Although 'small', its position close to **waffle slabs** supporting the slope caused concern.

A bid to prove a **lapse of planning permission** for 1–6 Canonmills Bridge has failed. See our website (21.2.17).

Council officials were scheduled to **meet stakeholders** at the end of Feb to discuss plans for Phase 6 of the Leith Walk improvement scheme. Locals have requested proposals for the area around **Gayfield Sq, Elm Row and London Rd** be viewed together and in the context of future development around **Picardy Place**. Objections to Phase 5 revised loading bays around Elm Row will be heard soon by a **Scottish Government Reporter** at a date to be confirmed.



To celebrate **250 years of the New Town**, a walking tour of light and '**Edinburgh's Georgian Shadows**' will revive the past from 5.30–8.30pm each evening between what's left of **St Andrew Sq** and what remains to be ruined in **Charlotte Sq** (23 Feb–26 Mar). The event is part of **Scotland's Year of History, Heritage & Archaeology 2017**. Perhaps this initiative could extend to other capital venues/times of year as a fun alternative to the **meaningless waste** of energy that is Street of Light.

Spurtle is **excited and worried** by plans to demolish, redevelop, and expand capacity at the **Ross Bandstand** in W. Princes St Gardens. See our website (9.2.17).

The former **public loos** at Canonmills are to be converted to **office use**. What kind of office we don't know. The **new owners** are keeping a tight lid on it.

Vittoria, the Brunswick St (and now George IV Bridge) eating institution has been shortlisted in the **Best Business** category of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce's 2017 Awards. We have **high hopes** for them based on pasta performance.

The **Elm Row sub-post office** will close for 'modernisation' on 4 Mar and reopen on 16 Mar.

Planning reform – have your say

Leith Central Community Council and members of the public discussed the latest stage of the Scottish Government's consultation on Planning reform at their February meeting.

In conversation with Ben Macpherson, MSP for Edinburgh Northern & Leith, their suggestions included:

- better local-authority Enforcement, to ensure for example that developers' Section 75 obligations for public-realm improvements are met in timely fashion
- better funding of Enforcement through central-government funding or a reformed and more expensive fees structure for developers
- allow local authorities to set their own sliding scale of fees to profit fairly from market demand
- an increased minimum requirement for social housing in new developments
- restrictions on 'right to buy' social housing, and on overly generous mortgage loans which fuel house prices
- greater engagement, earlier, of locals, and more attention to local (non-specialist) sense of place
- give greater weight to opinions when public, officials and politicians are united in opposition to an application
- increase transparency of appeals process by holding them in public or as a tribunal with 3 Reporters present
- safeguards to make sure key provisions of local development plans are retained in later revisions
- new measures to discourage land banking and incentivise brownfield development.

The Scottish Government's 'Places, People & Planning' consultation can be found here [goo.gl/HjN4t1], and responses are invited by 4 April. Macpherson urged locals to make Edinburgh residents' voices heard amid the clamour of national and commercial voices.

Leith Street Bombshell

TH Real Estate – developers of the new St James Quarter – seek permission to partially close Leith Street for up to 44 weeks between the 2017 and 2018 Edinburgh Festivals.

THRE Director of Development Martin Perry told *Spurtle* the works are to reconfigure and renew utilities along Leith Street and help facilitate wider regeneration of Picardy Place and the East End. 'By renewing and enhancing local infrastructure as part of the Edinburgh St James scheme,' says Perry, 'we are also greatly reducing the requirement for future works and repairs, thereby minimising future disruption around the completed environment'.

The street will remain open to cyclists, pedestrians and emergency services. Greenside Row and Calton Rd will stay open for local businesses and parking. Other vehicles will follow an 'enhanced diversion route, with increased capacity'.

The proposed move comes despite earlier assurances from THRE that no such closures would be required. A report is expected to go before the Transport & Environment Committee on 21 March, with public consultation as soon as possible. THRE's recommended approach has been supported by the City Wide Traffic Management Group, which includes representatives of CEC, transport providers and emergency services. Critics are thunderstruck. See our website (1.3.17).



Botanics review arts programme

The Royal Botanic Gardens have set up a group to advise their Trustees on a future arts programme across Scotland, including the use of Inverleith House in Edinburgh. It will report by the end of June.

The splendidly titled Professor Christopher Breward, Principal of Edinburgh College of Art and Vice Principal (Creative Industries and Performing Arts), University of Edinburgh will chair consultants drawn from education, the arts and creative industries.

The group's brief is to develop an 'inclusive and high-quality' programme which will complement RGBE's other work and be financially sustainable.

A summer exhibition is already scheduled for Inverleith House, but many who objected to the internationally renowned gallery's shock closure last October (Issue 257) remain to be convinced. Those who gathered again in protest here on 20 February say they will not accept once-in-a-blue-moon exhibitions. Others are disappointed that the gallery's former exhibitions director Paul Nesbitt has not been included in the consultation group.

Its remit can be read here: [goo.gl/19Opbt]. See also our website (20.2.17).

Distinguished birds in black and white

In the past two weeks, I have had the pleasure of observing a pied wagtail on the pavement outside the Cameo cinema, another outside Boombarker's on Broughton Street, and a further pair at the junction of Broughton Street and Broughton Place.

These black and white charmers ran about in rapid rushes, wagging their tails at each pause, and seemed oblivious to passing humans. They fed on tiny morsels of things, possibly insects and seeds in fissures. As a Highlander, I have always viewed them as water-birds – they are also known as water wagtail and dishwasher – but these seemed perfectly attuned to the urban environment.

Another Broughton Street habitué is a handsome carrion crow with plumage suffused with a deep ebony and purplish sheen. He may be found on top of the bus shelter or the parking ticket machine outside Crombie's, and has taken a special shine to the shop's Simon Faulkner (who wouldn't?). When he spies Simon he fluffs his fine feathers and emits repeated, plaintive caws. We look forward to Simon's take on Ted Hughes's unsettling 'Crow' poetry, but not to anything resembling crow pie among Mr Crombie's delectable offerings. *JRM*



Setting the limits on speed signage

CEC's citywide 20mph speed limit may or may not be welcomed by most Edinburgh residents. Either way, common sense and aesthetics ought to inform the way the signage is introduced.

Quite apart from the contradictory speed limits on Hamilton Place (see Issue 259), inconsistency and ugliness seem to be the order of the day. One example is Northumberland Street, where there are no signs and no road markings on the main road, but massive white 20mph markings in the small side lanes.

Sited at the turnings into these lanes, the markings suggest that you are now entering a 20mph zone and leaving a 30mph one. Of course, you're not: the 20mph limit applies (effectively) everywhere.

So apart from being horribly intrusive, and located in places where reaching 20mph would be almost impossible anyway, the markings implicitly suggest that when you exit the side lanes you're returning to an area with a higher speed limit.

How clever is that? And how much did all that paint cost?

Edinburgh World Heritage director Adam Wilkinson describes the signs here as 'spectacularly lacking in clarity of thought', and reports multiple complaints about new signposts springing up across the New Town. City Centre Councillor Joanna Mowat says that painting the roundels on the setts is against the Council's own guidelines, but has found it difficult to pin down who was responsible. She raised the matter at the full Council meeting on 9 February.— *David Young*



Photo: Courtesy of Shona Malcolm.

Look out for: Great Spotted Woodpeckers

Once a rare sight, these formerly shy woodland specialists have learned to use their agility, powerful beaks and natural curiosity to make the most of food at bird tables.

Great Spotted Woodpeckers have impressive adaptations. Zygodactyl feet (2 toes facing forward and 2 back) provide excellent grip moving up and around trees; short stiff tail-feathers allow the bird to lean back while hammering trees with its beak. Usually this is in dead wood where the woodpecker's extra-long hook-tipped tongue winkles out nutritious larvae.

At this time of year, males seek more solid targets and strike repeatedly in behaviour called 'drumming'. This rapid rattle stakes out territory and can be heard early in the mornings in local parks.

Great Spotted Woodpeckers are easily recognised by their distinct black, white and red plumage and bounding flight, typical of short-winged forest birds. Once they land their unique upright posture is a dead giveaway.

They are undoubtedly a welcome sight in our parks, but not for everyone. Although they feed mainly on insects, they are not above putting their impressive carpentry skills to use in robbing smaller birds' nests.— *Miles Forde*

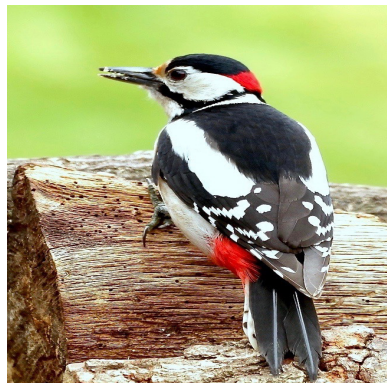


Image: Wikipedia, creative commons.

Briefly

The **New Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal** [goo.gl/gbn6q6] aims to provide context for **how planning decisions are made**. Comment on the latest draft at [goo.gl/5kfhUH] by **31 Mar**.

A **little bit of the Lake District** may be coming to Leith Walk. Ulverston-based **New Kadampa Tradition – International** seeks permission to open a Buddhist meditation centre at No. 172 (Ref. 17/00381/FUL).

Congratulations to Derek and Anna of **McNaughtan's Bookshop & Gallery**, who on 30 Jan took delivery of a unique and very precious first edition: **Lev Hugh Walker**.

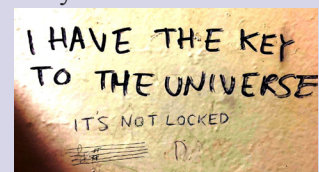
CEC officials are consulting local residents and **Leith Central Community Council** members on a range of options to help **pedestrians safely cross Pilrig St** at the Cambridge Ave junction.

Members of the congregation at **St James' Church** in Goldenacre seek to raise tens of thousands of pounds to restore a beautiful fresco there by **William Hole**. As described in Issue 254, it features a portrait of St James' charismatic minister the **Rev Charles Jenkins**, who went on to found St Philip's on Logie Green Road and was responsible for **one-16th** of the often highly inflated Sir Richard Branson.



Life-saving defibrillators are being fitted to all **Edinburgh trams** for use by trained staff onboard and on platforms. If you're going to **keel over** outwith a surgery in Spurtleshire, **York Pl** and **St Andrew Sq** are possibly the best places to do so. See our website (14.2.17).

The proprietors of **Charlotte Sq Garden** have asked the Book Festival to **reduce its impact** on the green space. So, the Book Festival may now seek to partially shift **sideways into George St**. The proprietors want less impact so that they can hold more events in their green space at other times of year. **Edinburgh**: sometimes it's like being stuck in a Kafka novel with fewer funny bits.



'Edinburgh has the best graffiti,' asserted 'Radio-fuelled, **coffee-enabled, book enriched, @hughespeg aficionado, podcast constructor, and lifelong learner**' **Colin Fraser** on Twitter last month. This was his proof.

Moreover ...

Spartle's AGM will be in **Broughton St Mary's Parish Church**, Bellevue Cres, on **9 Mar at 7pm**. A normal monthly collision of opinions will follow. **All welcome**.

Glasgow-based **G1 Group PLC** seeks planning consent to make external alterations at **13B and 13C Dundas St** and change the use to include both retail and a **178-seat restaurant** within linked ground-floor and basement properties (17/00401/FUL). G1's **extensive portfolio** already includes numerous restaurant/bars, hotels and clubs in Edinburgh [goo.gl/XmXkw2].

NTBCC's **discussion of licensing**, last month, raised a telling point. There is, claimed one member, a **fundamental disjunction** between the Council going hell for leather to promote **consumption of liquid** whilst simultaneously shutting down the city's **public toilets**. We agree. NTBCC will post guidelines on its website about **how to object** to licensing amendments/applications soon.

Allegations of **unauthorised use** of a garage (yes, *that* garage, yet again) on E. Scotland St Lane as a **short-stay vacation unit** are being pursued by CEC Enforcement (17/00031/ECOU). See Issue 259. The owner has appealed.

A **critical report** on last year's closure of 17 Edinburgh schools contains **recommendations** for the Council, other public and private bodies, and the construction industry on: **procurement**, construction, training, recruitment, the role of building standards and **independent certifiers**, and sharing information. See our website (10.2.17).

Spartle hears intriguing rumours about a **well-known ballet company** acquiring one of the Gordon Street arches as an **Edinburgh venue**. A performance could feature here as early as this summer. **Watch this space**.

A CEC review of **containerisation and gull-proof bag provision** has provoked concern on Northumberland St. One resident says '**all hell will break loose**' if communal bins are introduced there **against locals' wishes**. However, the situation is muddled by some residents who are **vehemently opposed** to communal bins in their own streets not being vehemently opposed to using them in someone else's. The **resulting overflows** disgust and inconvenience all.

Spartle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, M. Forde, R. Fullerton, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, S. Michael, M. Orr, L. Rogers, C. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.
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Deidre Brock MP
Edinburgh North and Leith



Regular Surgeries

Leith: 1st Friday of the month
1–2pm, 166 Great Junction Street
Leith Walk: 2nd Friday of the month
3.30–4.30pm, McDonald Rd Library
Stockbridge: 3rd Friday of the month
1–2pm Stockbridge Library
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre: Last Friday, 4–5pm
dbrockmp.scot
Tel: 0131-555 7009
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Scottish Snowdrop Festival

Snowdrop Walks at the Botanics
every Friday, Saturday and Sunday
until 12 March, 11am
www.rbge.org.uk



Royal
Botanic Garden
Edinburgh

LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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

Participate in local democracy.

Make representations to City of Edinburgh Council, other public bodies and private agencies on everything that matters locally.

Next meetings on 20 Mar/17 Apr, 7.00pm
McDonald Rd Library.
ALL WELCOME.

leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates



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Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

Every Monday:
5-6pm at
Leith Library
28-30 Ferry Road
Edinburgh
EH6 4AE

Every Friday:
4-5pm at
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre
Pilton Drive North
Edinburgh
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New Town and Broughton Community Council

New Town & Broughton Community Council represents the views of local residents to City of Edinburgh Council.

Come along and make a difference on **13 March and 10 April at 7.30pm**
Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbc.org.uk