

Spurtle



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No 253

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

FINALLY, GLIMMER OF GOOD NEWS FOR HARD-PRESSED St ANDREW SQUARE

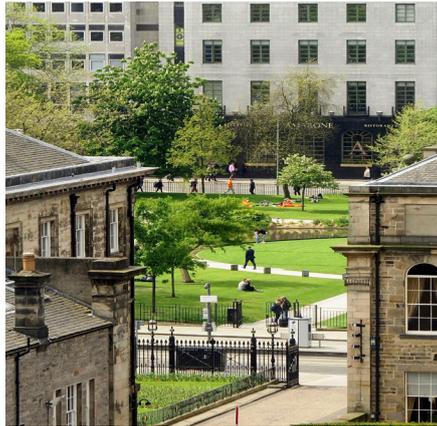
The Spanish food company Ibérica Food and Culture will add another tapas restaurant/bar to its chain at 8 St Andrew Square soon (see our website 31.5.16).

This is the third such London-based business we've heard has committed to the new building, with Drake and Morgan (burgers/steaks/sharing platters) and Busaba Eathai (Thai soups, curries, stir fries, noodles, salads) signalling their intention to set up here in August last year.

In other news, last month City of Edinburgh Council's Planning Enforcement announced that the failure to restore St Andrew Square Garden on time to its former state after the Christmas/Hogmanay celebrations was a 'breach of Planning controls'. It belatedly told Essential Edinburgh to get on with it, long after Essential Edinburgh had belatedly done so. Inadequate as it may seem, CEC's response formally records EE's shortcomings and responsibilities. It's a useful first step in building a case against their management of the site.

Meanwhile, *Spurtle* hears that Standard Life's sole ownership of 8 St Andrew Square is having an unforeseen effect. It has simplified what previously was a much more complicated and incoherent mix of 'frontagers', meaning that those proprietors disquieted by downmarket, disruptive overuse of the area for events are becoming more influential.

We understand there are now 'conversations ongoing about how the use of the Square can be lessened so that it remains a green place for more of the time'.



NEW FACE IN NEW TOWN



Paul Clark proudly displays a woodcut of the Anatolian city of Nicaea, dating from 1493. It's just one item in a fascinating abundance of historic maps, charts and globes in the newly arrived business on Northumberland Street, formerly occupied by the Gallery on the Corner. For more, see our website (15.6.16).

EDINBURGH WORLD HERITAGE VIEW ON RBS PROPOSALS

Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH) will join efforts to contain the scale of development at Royal Bank of Scotland's site between Dundas St and King George V Park.

Addressing locals last month, EWH Director Adam Wilkinson described the forthcoming planning application as 'a big issue'.

He said the site is conceptually part of the New Town, not outwith it, and is legally protected as it falls within the Conservation Area and EWH site buffer zone. Architects here should seek inspiration from the similar topographical challenge of Charlotte Square, and look to design in sympathy with the scale and punctuation of neighbouring pavilions.

Large buildings, forming part of the scheme, will be intended to maximise returns from sale of the land. Future developers will likely seek even larger buildings to recoup costs and increase profits. Wilkinson considers that current proposals are already at least two floors too high.

UNESCO wrote to the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport in December 2015, expressing concern at the impact of development in Edinburgh on the World Heritage Site's major buildings and visual integrity. That letter, regarded by many as a thinly veiled rebuke, will form 'part of the toolkit' in any EWH response to RBS's proposals.

RBS's detailed planning application was expected to be submitted in late June.

IS THE NEW IMPROVED, PEOPLE-FRIENDLIER GEORGE ST AFFORDABLE?

New outline principles for the layout and uses of George Street were approved by the Transport and Environment Committee on 7 June (see our website 3.6.16).

Key points include ambitions to:

- re-establish George Street's primacy as an Edinburgh destination
- transform it into a multi-functional space for locals, businesses and visitors
- respect its unique built heritage and rebalance its use to favour pedestrians, cyclists 'and wider street experiences and activity'
- express the seasonal 'personality' of the city
- phase-in funding, design, construction and management over 6 years.



The process will now go on to look at detailed designs and materials.

Most responses we've heard (including that of the New Town & Broughton Community Council, which was closely involved in earlier consultations) have been very positive, and stress the long-term benefits of improving such a central location.

Most doubts have revolved around whether, in the short term, City of Edinburgh Council can afford the £28.6 million (capital costs) to support top-quality delivery, and whether such sums would be better spent on citywide road repairs.

Briefly



Unprecedented numbers of **Broughton Primary School** pupils participated in **Edinburgh Marathon-related events** earlier in the summer. Some 64 ran to raise money for **new playground equipment**. In recognition of their achievement, **Lothian Buses** honoured them with a Hibs-style **gold, open-topped bus photo opportunity** (see our website 2.6.16). **Well done, the kids**; and well done the remarkably **imaginative, organised and dynamic** Parent Staff Association.

For this year's **Edinburgh College of Art** degree show, Interior Design graduate **Annabelle Ruddell** came up with a Scandinavian-style pod dwelling specifically tailored to fit inside **New Town** mews garages. Is this the shape of Festival lets to come?

With reference to the imminent **Royal Bank of Scotland** planning application (see p.1), a special public meeting will be held by NTBCC – probably in **St Mary's Parish Church at 7.30pm on 30 July**. It will guide members of the public on **how to frame their arguments** for maximum effect.

A change of use from Class 1 (Shops) to Class 1 (Shops) and/or Class 3 (Food and Drink) has been granted for premises at **3 Shrub Place**, next door to Sainsbury's. This paves the way for a **Starbucks to open here** (see our website 2.2.16). **Leith Central Community Council** objected to the proposal (Ref. 16/01000/FUL) on (coffee) grounds of **overprovision**.

Söderberg – the new **Swedish bakery** on Broughton St – is on schedule to open in the second week of Aug.

After a 4-year absence, the 3-tonne **Forsyth finial** was returned to its spot above **Princes St and S. St David St** last month. **Gilbert Bayes'** intricate gilded sphere, comprising **cherubs footing about** around signs of the zodiac, was refurbished by **Powderhall Bronze**, now located in Granton. See our website (27.6.16).

Batley's **fractious relationship** with locals continues. Last month, HGVs were **repeatedly admitted** into the McDonald Street cash-and-carry's yard to noisily unload a **full 10–15 minutes** before they're allowed to do so at 7am. **Rudely disturbed neighbours** have complained to CEC and Cllr Gardner (Ward 12).

Central Edinburgh New Town Association's **annual garden party** is scheduled for 30 Jul. in West Queen St Garden. Always of **anthropological interest**, the event was open to the public last year, for a modest entry fee, and worth every penny.

Sunday parking charges brought in for city centre

Restricted parking and charges have been brought in across the city centre (Zones 1–4) and main routes throughout the controlled parking zone on Sundays 1pm–6.30pm.

The previous free-for-all was causing problems for public transport and private road users. Transport Convener Cllr Lesley Hinds said the status quo was 'simply not sustainable now that Edinburgh, like so many other places, has become much more of a 24/7 city in terms of socialising and shopping habits'.

The solution arrived at was, Hinds said, an effort to 'achieve a balance between alleviating uncontrolled parking and increasing turnover for businesses and making travel easier for residents and visitors'.

The decision not to introduce restrictions and charges on Sunday mornings was welcomed by Edinburgh churches, who feared it would reduce the number able to attend Sabbath services.

Butts top city litter list



Image: courtesy of www.sustainablog.org

Keep Scotland Beautiful's March 2016 assessment of cleanliness in Edinburgh was reported to the Transport & Environment Committee last month.

With only 62% of the public's 523 enquiries being handled within the agreed timescale, the City Centre & Leith neighbourhood partnership area fared least well across Edinburgh, and below the Council's 85% target.

Some 84% of City Centre & Leith streets were clean, again the poorest figures for Edinburgh and below both KSB and CEC's target figures.

The City Centre (64), Leith Walk (65) and Leith Central (63) wards fell below the CIMS national standard (67). But Edinburgh as a whole scored 71 with 93% of streets clean. The highest percentage of litter by type was smoking-related, found in 78% of the streets surveyed.

It's fair to point out that the City Centre & Leith areas comprise the busiest and most densely populated parts of Edinburgh, but the figures are disappointing nonetheless and the latest evidence of a chronic problem.

Abercromby Place – proposal for new homes behind the scenes

Planning permission is sought to convert former offices at 15–16 Abercromby Place into 11 flats, most with 2 bedrooms, one with 4 (Ref. 16/02439/FUL).

The A-listed building (originally two townhouses over 7 floors) was gutted c.1970, with only the south-facing façade partially retained. It has been vacant since 2015.

The new plan would remove the north façade, recladding it in stone, rearrange the windows, and provide overhanging balconies.

There would be a communal gym in the basement and a glazed pavilion and roof terrace at the top. Parking would be reduced from 17 places to 10, and the (now missing) mews building to the rear would be rebuilt as an office.

Wi-Fi deal too good to be true?



It may come as no surprise, but be aware that the city centre's new 'free' Wi-Fi (Issue 152) will come at a price – your Internet history.

Reader Alexander Frei's research shows users' details may be transferred to areas outwith Europe with lower data protection standards (our website 13.6.16).

Council partner intechologyWiFi may share data with other parts of its corporate empire, and with unspecified third parties if it thinks it's a matter of (undefined) public importance to do so.

Users' clickstream data (where they've been online, for how long and in what order) also looks likely to be traded.

Spurtle has mixed feelings about all this. In short, there's no such thing as a free horse in the mouth.

City crackdown on rubbish

POLICE NOTICE.

CLEANSING DEPARTMENT.

Notice is Hereby Given, That any Person who Deposits SHOP SWEEPINGS, WASTE PAPER or OFFENSIVE MATTER of any description on any Street or Court is liable for a Penalty of Forty Shillings, or to Imprisonment for Thirty Days.

The Police Constables have orders to report the Names of all Offenders with a view to their Prosecution.

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR OF CLEANSING.

Police Chambers, Edinburgh, July, 1883.

Campaigners sound out Community Council

A two-person delegation from the Music is Audible campaign addressed New Town & Broughton Community Council last month.

Karl Chapman (general manager at the Usher Hall) and arts journalist and author Neil Cooper depicted Edinburgh as almost uniquely bereft of venues, hamstrung by a Licensing requirement that amplified music should not be audible outside the premises.

As previously reported (our website 28.2.16, Issue 252), they want to replace this blanket ban with a stipulation that music should not be 'an audible nuisance to neighbouring residential premises'. They also seek to establish specific, measurable, Environmental Health noise criteria which could be uniformly applied by acoustically trained Council officers.

Using an 'agent of change' principle, they hope to put the onus for sound insulation on new neighbours moving next to music venues, or new venues moving next to residents. They say their proposals are commonsensical whereas the status quo is barely sustainable in legal terms.

NTBCC members were sceptical. One suspected the argument was promoter-rather than culture-driven. Another said that, given the unusual density of city-centre tenement habitation here, Edinburgh's current approach is wise and leads the way. Others argued that there may be room for compromise if cut-off times are clarified, and if rule changes facilitate live performances but exclude amplified recordings. CEC consultation will continue until 22 July.



Image: Wikihow, Creative Commons.

Look out for: Wrens

The Wren is Britain's commonest bird, but not the smallest – that's the diminutive and charming Goldcrest. However, wrens are the shortest, and it takes 1,400 wrens of them to equal the weight of our heaviest species the Swan.

In the past, Wrens had an important place in folklore and were ritually hunted on specific days of the year, which seems a bit harsh for such an inoffensive creature that spends most of its life in cover feeding on spiders and flies.

Although small, they pack a punch when it comes to singing – they're the loudest for their size in the UK. While singing, they will confidently perch in the open and advertise their presence through much of the year. The distinctive, stubby, upturned tail and conspicuous eye stripe make them easily identifiable.

Wrens have interesting habits; in winter they roost together in large numbers, packing into small spaces such as nestboxes. In spring, males make several nests from leaves and cobwebs, and advertise them to the female who will make her choice based on the quality of the camouflage.

Wrens are greatly affected by bad weather but their numbers soon bounce back due to their large brood size, meaning we can potentially see them in any areas of scrub or hedges around parks and gardens. — Miles Forde



Image: Andy Reago & Chrissy McLaren, Creative Commons

Latest St James traffic news

TH Real Estate insiders say principal access to the St James Centre demolition/Quarter development will be via York Place, but with a dedicated service lane on Leith St.

Up to 200 HGVs per day will come and go during an 18-month peak period during demolition and excavation, they told Leith Central Community Council in June. There will be holding areas on Regent Rd and elsewhere on Forth Ports land. Spoil will be crushed in Granton, with huge panels prefabricated off site.

Work will start this autumn, and should finish by 2020. Picardy Place is likely to be redeveloped towards the end of that time frame.

Routes for construction traffic are still being planned using the Council modelling system. Such vagueness so late concerns locals, especially those on or near Leith Walk.

Edinburgh's EU Referendum results

Edinburgh voted emphatically to remain within the EU on 23 June. Some 73% of eligible voters turned out (252,481), and 73% of them backed staying in (187,796). In the North & Leith constituency, 78% (44,618) voted to remain, 22% (12,435) to leave. The highest proportion of Brexit voters was in the city's West constituency (29%), perhaps reflecting the area's greater remoteness from mainland Europe.

Briefly

Zone 1 of the new **Edinburgh 20 mph speed limit** will start on 31 Jul in the city centre (south and east of **York Place**). Zone 2 – which covers the whole of Broughton and the New Town – won't start until **27 Feb 2017**. Unhappy speed fiends may console themselves with the fact that **at least they are not in Dublin**, where the speed limit has just been reduced to 18.5 mph. Wherever you stand on this issue, **much harmless fun** may be had by, mid-journey, lecturing taxi drivers on the **virtues of the scheme** as if you assume they will agree with you. **Under no circumstances let them interrupt.**

William Gray's single '**Riddle Me Thistle**' – released with an unusual video by *Spartle's* Rhys Fullerton featuring **plastic bags in trees** (see our website 3.4.16) – has done well. The song has now featured on **BBC Radio 6 Music**, and the video has been viewed over 430 times on YouTube.

In Jan 2015, CEC's Transport & Environment Committee approved a **new pedestrian crossing for Pilrig St** at Cambridge Ave. The crossing has not been built because CEC '**could not achieve a workable solution due to loss of parking**'. CEC will continue to 'explore design options with local community and local members'. **Here's an idea.** Prioritise the crossing over the parking. Most **Pilrig St commuter parkers** will welcome such gentle encouragement to get out of their cars and use sustainable transport alternatives.

An **Educated Flea** has appeared at 32b Broughton St. So far, whilst **eels** have appeared on the mostly **Mediterranean menu**, shad, oysters, clams, soles, and Boston beans **have not**.

Meanwhile, the exacting **Edinburgh foodies** at lunchquest.co.uk have described new Broughton St arrival Rollo as 'fabulous', and rated York Place's Fortitude as **No. 1 in the city for coffee**.

New **Inverleith Park exercise equipment** for 'mature movers' will be unveiled in a grand opening on **24 July, 10.30am–12.30pm**. Live music, demonstrations, hopping, skipping and jumping for all ages.

The **Scottish Government's reporter** considering a planning permission appeal for Sandy Hill (Issue 252) will inspect the site at **3pm on 19 July**. Flourishing wildflowers have been strimmed for the occasion. This is **not an opportunity** for detailed discussion, and the public may not enter the land **without the owner's consent**. Apart from that, 'You are welcome to attend'. Meanwhile, some locals dispute the developer's 'redrawing' of borders. They say their gardens are specified in leases or established under Scots law by long undisputed usage.

Friends of the Rocheid Path will next meet on 4 July in **Stockbridge Library** at 7.30pm.

Moreover ...



Hold very tight, please. Police and Council attended in Jun. when this **Canon St** pavement began to part company from the basement adjacent. **Remedial works** are planned. Some new cones might be a good idea, too.

Drummond CHS has a new headteacher. **Jodie Hannan** has joined from **1,500-strong Dunfermline High School**, where she was Depute Head for the last 5 years and Head of House. Her background is History, and she has a track record for **raising standards and attainment**, and **developing leadership** among both pupils and staff. **Sue Cook** returns to Leith Academy after nearly 2 years as Drummond's Acting Head (see website 14.6.16).

A leading **construction professional** has been appointed to chair the inquiry into **Edinburgh's PPI school fiasco**. The architect John Cole has particular expertise in improving the quality of new, **public-sector design, procurement and building**. He will start this autumn and is anticipated to complete his report in December. See our website (17.6.16).

Alarming claims by a member of the public about a **pollution-induced 'asthma epidemic'** at a local primary school caused a sharp intake of breath at last month's **NTBCC meeting**. *Spurtle* investigated and found that there is **no such epidemic** and no unbroken line of buses pumping fumes into the playground here at 6 o'clock in the morning. **City-centre diesel emissions** are a problem, but not on the scale alleged in this instance.

Under the *New Roads and Street Works Act 1991*, **Scottish Power** have 6 months after recently completing work at the west end of Forth St to **permanently repair** the setts. But, even before locals could start the clock running, SP tore up **the same section again** for 10 days from 25.6.16. When will it start/end?

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LONDON1 **HOT SHAVE** BARBER

Appointments not necessary,
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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
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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.

You're welcome to attend
our next meeting
on 8 August at 7.30pm
Broughton St Mary's Parish
Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbcc.org.uk