

# Spurtle



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



**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER** Free

May  
2025

No 350

Tel: 07455 770474

[spurtle@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:spurtle@hotmail.co.uk)

## Q&A FOR SJ ON T&E

Cllr Stephen Jenkinson (SJ), Con- vener of the Transport & Environ- ment Cmte, answered questions on predetermined topics at New Town & Broughton Community Council's 14 Apr meeting. We summarise below.

**Communal bin review:** With cross-party support, SJ has in- creased flexibility on bin-hub place- ments. Can't please everyone. Les- sons have been learned [in response to lengthy list of alleged review shortcomings] from fair criticisms. Consultation is an 'iterative process' with some but not all concessions possible. Officials will be more col- laborative in liaising with commu- nity councils. Council must focus on greatly improving city-centre recycling rates.



**E-bikes:** Council has no powers to compel better cyclist behaviour or to license bike use. Instead work- ing to understand delivery riders' work conditions and encourage good practice. Only Police can en- force rules. Future improvement re- quires Holyrood legislation. 40mph e-bikes were never considered when cycle lanes were designed. [SJ seemed not to grasp legality of such ebikes but requirement for rid- ers to have driving licences.]

**E London St (ELS):** Apr's T&E Cmte voted not to fix ELS ahead of other setted streets already sched- uled for repair. This despite realising negative effect of noise/vibration on residents. Insufficient cross-party support for an amendment to change

priorities, and SJ's hands tied by other pressing demands at a time of chronic underinvestment. Visi- tor Levy may allow more than one street per year to be fixed in future [but for now seems ELS must wait till 2030/31]. SJ says Lothian Bus- es has done all it can to reduce use of ELS. Council will not introduce a weight restriction here, but SJ al- ways open to suggestions.

**George St and First New Town Project:** Council has been good at grand schemes but poor at deliv- ery. Unrealistic projects over 10- year window must be identified and 'paused' at May's T&E meeting. Yes [in answer to doubting Thom- as], Scottish Govt funding can be relied upon for the right projects presented in the right way to the right source.

**Public realm:** Drafting of Edin- burgh Street Design Guidance sits halfway between T&E and Plan- ning, which is a problem. SJ wants greater say and is working for this. Picardy Pl 'has great potential but looks unloved and half-baked'. Needs work by the summer.

**Licensing:** If locals have concern about pavements congested by ta- bles and chairs outside pubs/café[s] [as on Leith St], officials will check and enforce 1.5m clearance. [Mem- ber of public says Council online re- porting system is 'graveyard of fond hopes'.] Businesses may themselves modify layouts to preserve goodwill around valuable business asset. SJ agrees with Cllr Mowat that better/ more regular checking of problem hotspots should be a priority.

There was **general appreciation** for SJ's attendance without a blind- fold, and his calm responses under (polite but sustained) fire. Perhaps inevitably, some thought he lacked a local's grasp of local detail, and did not appreciate the depth of feel- ing on bins and E London St. Others said his sense of 'political realities' eclipsed his commitment to the 'art of the possible'.

## CÉAD MÍLE Fáilte



Bedbug anxiety reached a peak in Edinburgh 2 years ago, following mattress invasions in Paris and reports of a local infestation on the *Edinburgh Live* website. Fortunately, the reality proved less alarming than the clickbait. Adult specimens grow to about 5mm long, although this beastie (pictured), recently spotted in the Rodney St Tunnel, is substantially larger. Bedbugs can appear at any time of year but are generally more numerous in spring and summer in places of dense oc- cupation and frequent turn-over. For advice on what to do if you're blessed with a visit, see the NHS guid- ance at [[bit.ly/weebstrds](http://bit.ly/weebstrds)].

## THE RAIN IS RAINING ALL AROUND

If Edinburgh's built heritage is to survive the challenges of climate change – not least long winter damps and tumultuous summer drenchings – practical steps are needed to restore, maintain and modify our old buildings. Adjoining neighbours will have to cooperate.

A case in point and likely shape of things to come features in plans for an A-listed home at 15 Howard Place (25/01787/LBC). It forms part of a terrace laid out for building by James Gillespie Graham in 1807. Robert Louis Stevenson was born at No. 8 in 1850.

Conservation specialists Tod & Taylor Architects in conjunction with Edinburgh World Heritage have been looking at ways to tackle the building's problematic roof drainage 'from the point of view of present shortcomings, taking into account future climate predictions'.



Their solution is to improve discharge from the internal gutter, to increase the height of the stair roof light base to raise it further above the gutter, and to replace the present fixed stair rooflight with a matching- size electrically operated velux unit, allowing for ventilation when required. They also propose raising the roof access hatch up the roof slope and restoring the front gutter lining to lead.

We're no experts, but it sounds to *Spurtle* like a prudent and thorough (if expensive) stitch in time; certainly a preferable alternative to piecemeal emergency fixes with crooked nails [[bit.ly/3Yv7PSD](http://bit.ly/3Yv7PSD)].

# Briefly



An enterprising multitasker is advertising on lampposts about the **New Town**. The self-confident all-rounder offers tutoring in biology, chemistry, mathematics, biochemistry and biomolecular technology. Also **dog walking**. Plus, by their own reckoning, they're a child and adult-friendly 'up and coming wizard'. They live in 'Comley Bank', where e's roam free.

With work starting soon to redevelop the **old Royal High School on Regent Ter** as the National Centre for Music, NCM seeks a chair and 3 other trustees to develop and launch the organisation. Music-loving candidates are sought who have **key expertise** in business development, brand and marketing, equalities/diversity/inclusion, and finance. More at [bit.ly/NCMtrustees].

**Harburn Hobbies** – whose tram-related boost in sales we reported in Aug (Issue 342) – has been acquired by PECO Model Railways, with whom they've been closely linked since the 1960s. With **Bob and Gillian Baird** approaching retirement, it was a good time to ensure the shop's continued success and character while benefiting from PECO's 'extensive resources and expertise'. Staff and customer service at '**Harburn Halt**' (67 Elm Row) will remain unchanged.

Ediston's Ross McNulty says the developers of the much delayed **New Town Quarter** between Dundas St and King George V Park are in the final stages of **procuring a contractor** for residential elements of the proposal. A **new application** for student accommodation (not build-for-rent) and homes (not offices) is expected soon.

The **Friends of King George V and Scotland Yard Parks** reconvened last month after a long hiatus. The AGM, held at Broughton St Mary's, aimed to refill committee positions with a **representative sample of park users**, some perhaps with space to store gardening tools. In unrelated related news, *Spurtle* has heard from one local resident keen to restore a **Pickleball court** in the park. He tells us, 'For many years I played tennis but 12 months ago I switched to Pickleball, which has proved a real benefit. Apart from great exercise and **less strain on my knees**, it has proved to be a very sociable activity and ideal for retired people like myself. The well-being benefits are significant.' In-depth online research suggests Pickleball is a **skilful but accessible sport for all ages**. You can pick up a paddle and within 5 minutes of learning the rules be playing a competitive game with your friends. Players need neither canoes nor pickled onions to get started.

Keith Crawley's 'pint-sized replicas' of 12 Edinburgh pubs – including the **Barony Bar, Cask and Barrel** and **Conan Doyle** – featured in the *Guardian* last month [bit.ly/weepubs]. Unfortunately, polylactic acid and computer-aided design software produce awful beer.

## Gull-proof sacks won't suit everybody

Council officials received over 1,600 responses to its consultation on Phase 6 of the Communal Bin Review.

Working through all these will take time, but officers have already written to respondents thanking them for their participation and acknowledging common concerns.

Among these were: the additional home-storage space required for gull-proof sacks; inadequate or unclear collection frequencies; indoor storage of food, non-recyclable waste, nappies, healthcare waste and cat litter.

Council officers say that 'in many cases' where gull-proof sacks have been proposed, but most residents don't want them, bin-hubs will be considered instead following further consultation. *Spurtle* understands Barony St, comprising a large number of single-bedroom flats on multiple floors, is one such example.

Final service locations are scheduled to be presented in a report to the Transport & Environment Cmte this June. 'Regular updates' are promised for the Council webpage here [bit.ly/nolikem].



## Locals pursue tramway snags

Since we last reported on the subject, Trams to Newhaven (TTN) representatives have met members of Leith Central, Leith Harbour & Newhaven, Leith Links, and New Town & Broughton Community Councils.

They plan to keep meeting monthly until the end of this year to:

- draw up a full master list of non-trivial remaining issues
- prioritise which problems to fix when
- monitor progress against agreed schedules
- stay abreast of all TTN news.

The master list is being compiled by TTN staff, stakeholders and Ward councillors, and will be divided into community-council areas for detailed review.

RAG prioritisation will follow, with the most important issues (red) handled by TTN using its project funds. Amber issues (of secondary importance) and green issues (least important) will fall to specific Council departments, which will pay for them out of CEC budgets.

A master list will be finalised this month, with a summary going to the Transport & Environment Cmte in June. The aim is to have finished fixing the problems and to have presented a final close-out report by the end of 2025 or early 2026.

*Spurtle* salutes the work of the Community Councils Together on Trams group. These active citizens' tenacious and unflagging attention to details has done much to help prevent the tram extension escaping the proper scrutiny and attention of paid officials.



## Green light for Blenheim place 'bunker'

Blenheim Pl locals are shocked that the proposal for a residential 'bunker' they thought sank without trace last autumn has resurfaced and been wished bon voyage by Edinburgh Council (24/01889/FUL).

Architect Richard Murphy's design is for a 5-bdrm home facing out towards Calton Hill, with its back turned on the street to the north. This featureless blank is pressed close up against railings and the pavement, unlike other buildings in the New Town Conservation Area [bit.ly/3WToor9].

Councillors refused planning permission for it in Oct last year, citing its likely detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the site, the church next door, and views.

However, CSG Projects appealed, and at the Planning Local Review Body on 2 Apr this 'grand design in the wrong place' was approved when a tied vote by elected members was decided on the casting vote of a temporary convener.

Critics are unimpressed. They say the whole process was far too casual [bit.ly/4cF28Hf]. They feel the Convener appeared ill-informed and should have upheld the earlier decision to refuse made by Council officers under delegated authority.

Locals are now considering formal complaints first to the Council and then the Local Govt Ombudsman. Also on the cards, finances permitting, is a judicial review at the Court of Session.

But these options take time. CSG Projects now has planning permission and could start shovelling tomorrow.



## ‘On the road to nowhere’?

The Cockburn Association last month hosted a meeting to discuss the state of the capital’s streets and streetscapes.

Attendees from across the city voiced widespread disillusion with the Council’s vision, resources and competence to lift Edinburgh from clutter, crumbling infrastructure and grot. Potholes, broken setts, excessive traffic, poor pavements and pedestrian provision, graffiti and glacially slow progress loomed large.

This was an early step in a longer process of consultation and consideration. The Cockburn will produce its own report in due course.

Below, we cherry pick, out of context, some thought-provoking items which arose in discussions:

- Edinburgh is 10th in the world’s most walkable cities.
- UK-wide implementation of ‘Martyn’s Law’, to protect public spaces from terrorism, will soon have major effects on the design and appearance of our streets.
- 4.6% of capital streets are setted. Two-thirds of Edinburgh traffic originates in the Lothians.
- Ward 11’s Cllr Mowat is among those calling for the Visitor Levy to help fund a dedicated city-centre manager. Edinburgh World Heritage says the same source could finance a specialist sett-repair team.
- When open, new hotels on Princes St will base another 1,000 tourists close to the city centre.

The general tone of the meeting was gloomy. However, it’s sometimes easy to forget that Auld Reekie’s charm lies partly in the fact that it’s not a pristine northern capital more akin to a dental surgery.



## Briefly



Image: Mike Orr

After 11 months *in situ*, the **Gayfield Sq** trip hazard we reported online in Feb [bit.ly/Gayfieldtrips] was still there in late Apr. However, it **no longer covered the hole** in the footway it was meant to protect us from. The original metal plate had shifted and now served no function beyond **stubbing toes and felling the unwary**. Meanwhile, the collapsed BT manhole cover which caused the whole problem remains unfixed beneath a **plastic overlay** and varying numbers of traffic cones. Who will **take responsibility** for sorting the issue?

After a chequered recent history in which the 5-storey former BBC studio at **6 Queen St** was twice found to be operating without authorisation, first as a hostel (2017) then as holiday flats (2021), plans are afoot to regularise the situation. **QS Properties Scotland** seeks consent to turn the former ‘offices’ into a **Class-7, 10-suite aparthotel** (25/01680/FUL). Aparthotels of 5 or more units are exempt from STL licensing controls. Planning consent was granted in 2018 for **residential use** here but was not taken forward.

From the **Caledonian Mercury** (12 Nov 1728):—Vienna, Nov. 6. The Commissioners who met at the House of Count Staremberg, to hear and examine into the Complaints of Merchants, relating to the new **Duties on Foreign Goods** imported here, have rejected the Tariff which was published here for that Purpose, as **prejudicial to Commerce**. A new Tariff will shortly be drawn up, but till such time as that can be settled, the Duty of Importation will be restored to the ancient Foot.

The screen career of award-nominated former **Broughton Primary School** pupil Ruaridh Mollica (25) goes from strength to strength. He has already played important roles in TV series **Witness No 3** and **Stonemouth** and now stars in the recently released Miko Mäkelä film **Sebastian**. Mollica plays an aspiring writer living in London who begins a double life as a sex worker in order to research his **debut novel**. Who now recalls Beatrix Potter’s inspirational visits to **Dunkeld**?

Balfour St’s **Griffen Fitness** celebrated 20 years in business last month. Still going strong and not out of puff.

The Chinese restaurant and Canonmills institution **Loon Fung** closed for renovation in Jan and did not reopen as promised on 14 Feb or 27 Mar. Instead, it’s been replaced at **1–2 Warriston PI** by Viet Taste: a ‘Vietnamese Restaurant with modern twist’. The new place had yet to open as we went to press but had already made a good start by securing a **Food Hygiene certificate**.

## Our changeful climate

Shortened from the *Edinburgh Evening News* (8 May 1886):—One day in last week the thermometer rose 30 deg. and fell 27 deg., all in 12 hours. This is an illustrative example of what the weather can do in this country, and affords excellent proof of the adaptability of the English “constitution” to a changefulness which not many of the inhabitants of more equable climes could with impunity undergo.

Whatever the weather may be for some 5 or 6 weeks to come, no prudent person should venture to lay aside winter clothing altogether. “Cast not a clout till May be out,” and even then make any desired change discreetly, for “fickle as the wind” is a proverb which has more than metaphorical force, and which it is well all who value their health should lay very practically to heart.



## Homes with a peel

A recent article by Stephen Hicks in *The Modernist* offers interesting insights into the design history and community spirit of Category C-listed Claremont Court.

Infilling the site of a former biscuit factory, the scheme was commissioned by Edinburgh Council in 1957 under its programme of welfare-state housing provision.

Basil Spence & Partners’ plans of 1959–62 aimed at promoting a functional and ‘classless’ micro-society of interacting neighbours. To this end it included wide stairways, deck access, open-plan living, multi-functional kitchens, balconies overlooking shared gardens, cottages for the elderly, a communal laundry, rooftop drying greens, basement pram stores and light-filled banded windows.

Not all these functions remain, and today’s residents vary in how much sociability they feel survives. Some resent absentee private landlords, transient tenants, and the reduction in social housing. Many criticise Council neglect of the scheme and feel stigmatised by its visible disrepair. Others, though, are intensely proud of the built community, one describing it as a successful ‘little study in how to live next to each other’.

‘A sense of belonging,’ says Hicks, emerges from such complex interactions between people, building and environment and – even though some aspects of the original design are no longer valued – others retain their significance for the production of neighbourhood and a sense of home.’—AM. [S. Hicks (2024) ‘Claremont Court: A modernist housing scheme and its neighbourhood(s)’, *The Modernist* (51), 25–28]. See also [bit.ly/BVpsycho].



# Moreover ...



Locals thought they had seen the last of end-on double-yellow-line parking in **E Claremont St**, of cars at least. But old habits die hard. We don't know who thought stopping here last month was a good idea (hindering routes in and out of **Melgund Ter** and picking up a ticket in the process). Perhaps they were tempted by the siren calls of **Co Wheels**: 'the hassle-free pay-as-you-go car club with vehicles ready and waiting at **convenient spots** all across the UK. No ownership, no stress – just drive when you need to!'

A frankly peculiar application to change a **Raeburn PI** family home into an eye clinic with associated retail, art gallery, and events/workshop/seminar space has been refused (24/05522/FUL; Issue 346). Officers said it would be **detrimental to amenity**. There were 30 objections, one of which drew attention to the **serious shortcomings** of an individual reported in the *Optician Magazine* on 16 April 2020.

**Edinburgh u3a** is a community group helping older people to continue their creative, educational and social interests in a **friendly and informal way**. On 3 May (10am–12pm), to raise awareness of 'positive ageing' in the local area, it's holding a coffee morning at the Out of the Blue Drill Hall on **Dalmeny St**. All positively old people welcome. More at [bit.ly/ncntnmdrn].

Beltane Fire Festival organisers said the Council levy on their use of **Calton Hill** at the end of last month would cause significant financial strain. **Calton Hill Conservation** Trust argues the modest surcharge is a reasonable expense to help preserve the venue for BFF and others.

Graffiti scratched into the paintwork of a new metal bench in **Bellevue** is more intriguing than you might expect. It comprises lyrics by the Apulian rapper Caparezza. The Italian Consulate on **E London St** helped us understand the origin of the words but declined to confirm or deny they appeared as part of some **outreach project** by the Cultural Institute. See [bit.ly/sono1eroe].

Following investigation of limestone and granite panels cladding the outside of **9–10 St Andrew Sq** (the A-listed Basil Spence building of 1960 which Sainsbury partially occupied until recently), further inspection is needed. Experts recommend **remedial fixings** to secure some areas, and removal and replacement of others where cracks/damage are irreparable and present risk.

'And ever again, in the wink of an eye,/Painted stations whistle by.' The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will take place at 6.00pm for 6.30pm in McDonald Rd Library on 5 May. Chris Rutterford will talk on **Colinton Tunnel and New Ventures in Alloway**.

**Spurtle Team**: E. Brown, P. Cockburn, E. 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.

## QUEEN STREET GARDENS

To the Proprietors of Queen Street Gardens (Eastern District) and of the houses in Heriot Row and Queen Street and Wemyss Place.

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Proprietors will be held at The Royal Scots Club, 29 - 31 Abercromby Place, Edinburgh on **Monday 19 May 2025 at 5.30pm** in terms of the Act of Parliament.

A meeting of the General Commissioners for the three districts will be held immediately after the meeting of the Proprietors.

M W Yellowlees, Clerk, Caledonian Exchange 19a Canning Street, Edinburgh EH3 8HE



## Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



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

I hold monthly Help & Advice Surgeries.

Get in touch for more details or if I can help.

**Phone:**  
0131 600 0134

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

Promoted by Ben Macpherson MSP, 34 Constitution Street, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6RS  
The costs of this publication have been met from parliamentary resources.  
The SPCB is not responsible for the content of external websites.

## LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL



Will you take a leading role in local democracy?

Are you interested in representing locals' views to City of Edinburgh Council, other public bodies and private agencies in this area?

Next meeting at 7pm on 19 May in McDonald Road Library.

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

## Tracy Gilbert MP

Member of Parliament for Edinburgh North and Leith

✉ [tracy.gilbert.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:tracy.gilbert.mp@parliament.uk)

f Tracy Gilbert

X [tracygilbert72](https://twitter.com/tracygilbert72)

📷 [tracygilbertmp](https://www.instagram.com/tracygilbertmp)

Tracy Gilbert

Member of Parliament for Edinburgh North and Leith



## Lorna Slater MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region



[@LornaSlater](https://twitter.com/LornaSlater)

[@Parliament.scot](https://www.parliament.scot)

0131 348 6997

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

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



Edinburgh's only multi award winning health store. Since 1904.

Hanover Healthfoods

[www.hanoverhealth.co.uk](http://www.hanoverhealth.co.uk)  
40 Hanover St | 0131 225 4291