

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

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STAFFORD CENTRE ON THE BRINK

The Stafford Centre on Broughton St risks closure if the Council's Edinburgh Integration Joint Board disinvests in community-based mental health services at its meeting on 26 Aug.

The possible loss or reduction of its £188k p.a. funding comes as the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership considers difficult decisions about how best to use scant resources in its next 3-year Strategic Plan (2025–28).

Set up in 1986, the SC supports 640 people each year, saving NHS Lothian and the EIJB up to £4.4m p.a. in psychiatric-hospital admissions. The Change Mental Health charity which runs the Stafford Centre says, if the organisation folds, demand will switch to overstretched and pricier NHS services, denying vulnerable users the benefits of early intervention and prevention at a time when demand for such help has never been greater.

It calls for EIJB to delay its proposals for one year, allowing time for an evidence-led, fiscally responsible and clinically sound redesign of SC services.

Preferable partnership

In response to possible cuts, supporters have started an online petition urging the authorities to commit to maintaining, if not expanding, mental health services at the Stafford Centre. 'Let's protect a vital resource for our community,' says Roy Crerar.

You can find it at [\[bit.ly/StfdPtn\]](https://bit.ly/StfdPtn). For more on Change Mental Health's 50-year history and activities in Edinburgh and beyond, see [\[bit.ly/chgmh50\]](https://bit.ly/chgmh50).



TIME TO LOOK UP



It is now 20 years since Scottish sculptor Helen Denerley's giraffes appeared on Greenside PI (Issue 128). The OMNi Centre has marked the occasion with Glaswegian-traffic-cone-style party hats and some budget literary criticism available via QR code on adjacent temporary interpretation boards. They explain the *Dreaming Spires* as referencing 'perspective, vision and grace', overlooking Roy Campbell's more problematic assertion of masculine and colonial religious steeples in his 1946 poem which inspired the work. OMNi marketing fluff says the anniversary is 'a perfect moment to reflect on how far they [the giraffes] have come and to look ahead to all the exciting adventures still to come.' It makes no sense. Those responsible care more about Instagram coverage for the entertainment venues behind.

FEW OPTIONS FOR MANAGING EBIKE DELIVERIES

A report to the Transport & Environment Cmte this summer identified the lack of proactive, targeted regulatory options for managing commercial ebike deliveries [\[bit.ly/ebrrpt\]](https://bit.ly/ebrrpt). It emerged amid growing concern over pedestrian safety in busy city-centre areas.

In particular, the 1974 Health & Safety at Work Act does not apply outside work premises and cannot address issues such as dangerous driving, obstruction of public pathways, nuisance and anti-social behaviour. Furthermore:

- The precise remit of Environmental Health law offers little on commercial ebike issues.
- No legislative or other measures exist to create protected delivery zones.
- Licensing regulations don't apply to cyclists.
- Stricter regulation will require new primary legislation from Holyrood.
- Police Scotland collects no specific data on accidents involving ebikes.

Edinburgh Council has issued leaflets on safe and considerate road use, tried better engagement with riders (e.g. consulting on proposed infrastructural changes) and held talks with major delivery platforms. These strike *Spurtle* as worthy but inadequate.

Alternative perspectives

Rider representatives argue that much cycling on pavements is explained by safety fears around junctions. More and wider bike lanes (free of potholes and separated from other traffic), dropped kerbs and better traffic-light phasing would reduce problems.

Precarious and exploitative work conditions in the gig economy leading to social isolation, financial hardship and the need for speed are explained in a Workers Observatory video at [\[bit.ly/WOebks\]](https://bit.ly/WOebks).

Meanwhile, we detect a reluctance to acknowledge two contributory factors in the overall problem. (1) Unspoken hostility (often verging on racism) towards people of colour who may or may not have the right to work in the UK. (2)

A gig economy grown fat on the public's lardy-arsed reluctance to collect their own carry-outs. For background, see Sustrans' 2023 study *Insights into an Overlooked Demographic*: [\[bit.ly/dciod\]](https://bit.ly/dciod)



ANNUAL AWARDS, PERENNIAL ISSUES

Hopetoun Cres Gdn, Inverleith Pk, King George V Pk, London Rd Gdns and Victoria Park have won prestigious International Green Flags from Keep Scotland Beautiful this summer.

The awards recognise bench-marked standards of cleanliness, safety, good maintenance and community involvement.

Edinburgh's 38 award-winners (the highest of any city north of the border) are run by the Council, NHS Lothian, Heriot Watt Uni and Friends of Corstorphine Hill.

It may be hard to believe when traversing the New Town's stone-faced 'draughty parallelograms', but Edinburgh's 144 parks and green spaces make up around 49% of the capital's total area. However, geographical distribution and unequal access (e.g. public exclusion from private spaces) mean that any boast about this being the UK's greenest city should be taken with a pinch of organic fertiliser.



Briefly



Edinburgh Street Food has at last moved its illuminated sign to a Greenside spot where it does not obstruct tactile paving or offend quite so much the douce conservatives of **Picardy PI**. Consent for the gargling show-flamingos in their original position was first refused in Apr 2023 (Issues 327–8).

'Bellevue lad' **Mark Meiklejohn** stars in a Fringe show this month (50 Lothian Rd): *A History of Scotland in 6 Bad Ideas*. 'It's a celebration of **Scotland's long, proud history** of blunders, errors, hysteria, greed, hysterical greed and bat-shit stupidity.' The **show is free** and there's no need to book ahead. Details: [bit.ly/bdScids].

Officials have refused Freshwave Facilities Ltd permission to erect a **20m telecom monopole** supporting 5 antennas and 2 dishes, 2 cabinets and ancillary equipment at the very far end of Tesco's car park above **Logie Grn Rd** (25/02044/TELE). Officers said the mast's siting within a Local Biodiversity and Nature Conservancy Site would **spoil visual amenity** and harm mature trees, with a risk that pruning could kill them. Locals submitted **146 letters of objection**.

Calton Hill Conservation Trust has secured £5k from the city's Community Grants Fund for a photogrammetric survey by **Headland Archaeology** this autumn. **Photogrammetry** produces accurate and measurable 3D models from angled 2D images. 'The project will **engage the local community** in workshops and activities to help understand what we already know about the hill's history, and how; and to develop **shared community questions** about what they'd like to know about the history of the hill.'

Council preparations for a temporary, 2.4m-high, protective mesh fence round the new studios and workspaces of **Powderhall Stables** suggests the start of housing construction at **165 Broughton Rd** may be edging closer. Perhaps. Possibly. Maybe. The barrier, to be in place for 5 years, would nevertheless be a sensible precaution to stop **playful artists** bouncing onto the building site in search of inspiration.

Retties are marketing 11 new apartments (one 3-bdrm, ten 2-bdrm) on **Eyre PI**. Set in the 'charming and vibrant neighbourhood of Canonmills', the homes offer a '**sanctuary of sophistication**' for between £480k and £540k. Visit [bit.ly/3TWnoyj].

We regret the closure on **E Claremont St** of Studio 38 which, since its delayed opening post-Lockdown, had drawn on the **complementary interior-design skills** of Julia Clare, Apostrophe Woodcraft, Isle of Skye Paint Co, Jenna Ferguson Art and Honua Pottery. The company prided itself on '**Scottish, stylish and sustainable**' suppliers, but appears not to have combined them in a way which was financially viable.

New director for Edinburgh World Heritage

Terry Levinthal – Director of the Cockburn Association since 2017 – was appointed Director of Edinburgh World Heritage in July. He has held previous senior roles in Scottish heritage organisations such as: Historic Environment Scotland; the Scottish Civic Trust; the National Trust for Scotland; and the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority.

The appointment comes after a period of turbulence for EWH, with the abrupt and unexplained departures of its previous director and senior communications manager. EWH has appeared directionless of late, with accusations of poor accountability, fragile connections to stakeholders, and limited awareness of and ability to address its own shortcomings.

Levinthal's admirers hope that his drive, charm, experience, intelligence, contacts and presentational skill will be enough to fix things. Critics say that over the last 8 years he has not solved the Cockburn's ageing demographic and chronic shortfall between income and expenditure. But who could?

Neutral observers fear that the forthright Levinthal who championed many non-specialists' views will be silenced on the political tightrope EWH tiptoes along between UNESCO, Historic Environment Scotland and the Council.

Spurtle wishes Levinthal well when he starts in Sept. We also hope the Cockburn finds a similarly effective replacement. Interviews are scheduled for this month: [bit.ly/3GQUE5N].



Peeved by weeds

Reader and local resident Katie Wood is exasperated by out-of-control vegetation across the New Town. In correspondence shared with the *Spurtle*, she wrote to the Council last month demanding explanations and action.

A Street Care Service official replied that abandoning the twice-yearly use of hazardous and environmentally damaging glyphosate herbicide (in stages between Apr 2024 and the end of 2026) has resulted in widespread weed growth across Edinburgh. Limited numbers of staff now apply labour-intensive manual and mechanical alternatives instead. Investment has been made in better equipment.

'Studies from other local authorities that have stopped glyphosate use,' wrote the official, 'show there needs to be a greater tolerance to wildflowers and on-street weeds.'

'Complaints about weeds will be inspected and will be prioritised based on whether they present a health-and-safety hazard.' He then promised Council help for self-weeding individuals, groups and communities.

Wood was understanding but unpersuaded. She calls for the Council to rethink its priorities, saying vegetable trip hazards, graffiti and potholes have left the city less safe than before, unattractive to tourists, and resembling a slum. 'What happened to civic pride?' she wonders.

Her separate letter to the *Spurtle* on related issues appeared on our website on 4 July.



Visitor Levy advisers appointed



A panel comprising the Council, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Visit Scotland and the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils has appointed Julie Ashworth (pictured) to chair the Forum advising elected members on how to spend an anticipated £50m p.a. raised by the city's new Transient Visitor Levy (TVL) from next summer.

She is founder and CEO of BroadReach Leadership Consultancy, serves on several eminent boards and government advisory groups and describes herself as a long-time Edinburgh resident 'passionate about Edinburgh's heritage and future success'.

Ashworth, according to the HR gobbledegook beloved of would-be management wonks on Market St, 'brings to the role considerable experience in complex stakeholder management and financial planning, and is a skilled networker with a strong record of building relationships across multiple industry sectors, local and national governments'. What that means is anybody's guess ... probably nothing to do with selling wheelks.

Spending the money

Ashworth has in turn appointed 12 members with professional expertise in: tourism/business, festivals, heritage, employment and rights, youth/green issues, academia and community councils. Five of them are women.

The Council will spend the revenue on: 55% operations/infrastructure; 35% cultural heritage/events; and 10% destination management. Details: [bit.ly/EHvlevy].

A problem for those handling the TVL will be managing expectations: Edinburgh residents and interested parties have already spent this Crock of Gold many times over in their imaginations, using it for everything from new public toilets to self-emptying underground bin silos to crack teams of artisanal sett layers with powers to arrest buskers. We predict outraged disappointment for years to come.

Posing and pouting too close for comfort

There are some picturesque streets in London's Notting Hill where residents have had to stretch 'Police Line Do Not Cross'-style tapes across the front of their properties to prevent visiting Instagrammers posing and pouting on their doorsteps.



This intrusive behaviour appears to be spreading to parts of Edinburgh and seems symptomatic of a growing sense of tourist entitlement: 'I can pose wherever I please.' And while some New Towners may find it flattering that their homes are thought to be so photogenic, it reinforces the image of the city centre as an historic theme park, or one enormous stage set, rather than a place where people still live and maybe even do some work.

Depressingly, I suspect this is an irreversible trend. Even more depressingly, the 'Police Line' tapes in Notting Hill are pretty ineffective: most Instagrammers just ignore them. And barbed wire isn't a great look.—*David Young*

Squib squabble, Round 2

The Council consultation on repeating a Firework Control Zone for Calton Hill this autumn closed on 29 July.

Opponents of an FCZ here point to creeping expansion of the nanny state, and alleged Nimbyism by neighbours. They say there is little evidence of serious disruption associated with unregulated firework discharge on the Hill, and, even if there were, a little of what you fancy does you good.

FCZ supporters highlight familiar issues around disturbance of locals, pets and wildlife, general concerns about environmental impact and specific ones relating to this Site of Special Scientific Interest. They also claim associated and unacceptable increases in littering and other anti-social behaviour.

FCZs restricting the use of fireworks to specific times are proposed for 8 further districts across Edinburgh: Balerno, Corstorphine, Gracemount, Longstone, Moredun, Niddrie, Seafield and Sighthill. The temporary bans do not apply to publicly organised displays or small Category F1 fireworks.

Hoolie appropriate

A Wind Management Plan has been issued for the Fringe Spiegeltent in St Andrew Sq Gdn this month.

To be clear, the wind – a sometimes unruly element at events and troublesome here when arriving from the South or West – cannot be managed. But the venue can.

Measured at 10m above ground level, 40 mph wind (Force 6: Small audience members in motion, whistling heard in high hats, double bass used with difficulty, loud expletives and extensive foam from performers) would result in suspended public access and possible evacuation.

With 49+ mph wind (Force 7: Entire cabaret artistes briefly airborne, inconvenience felt when queuing for the loo, foam blown in streaks across pints of Pernod) there would be mandatory evacuation and temporary closure of the venue.

Statistics show August in Edinburgh is generally cloudy (52%), breezy (10.7 mph), wet (31%) and sweltery (10–19 °C).



Looking after tourists

Adapted from the Mid-Lothian Journal (20.1.1905):—A deputation to the Council by the Edinburgh Merchants Association addressed the subject of attracting visitors to Edinburgh. They emphasised the desirability of opening the Waverley Market for band performances on wet days, suggesting that chairs might be provided and proving that these chairs would recoup the Council for their outlay, and also spoke of the number of tourists visiting Edinburgh during the summer months.



They calculated that from 20,000 to 30,000 visited the City in a month. They pointed out that Hastings in England spent £1200 on advertising the town, and that the receipts from the chairs amounted to £700, leaving £500 to be found by the Council and merchants.

Cllr Macfarlane wanted to know if the deputationists were not of opinion that there was not sufficient accommodation in the City in the Picture Gallery, Industrial Museum, the Castle, Holyrood, and the Corporation Museum for tourists on wet days? The Lord

Provost said visitors could not sit down in Holyrood or the Castle. There were no seats provided there. The point, he however considered, might be discussed by the Council.

Councillor Macfarlane insisted upon an answer to his question, and Mr Reiss believed if the excursionists were willing to break themselves up into small parties, there might be sufficient accommodation found in the places mentioned. The matter brought under notice was remitted to his Lordship's Committee for consideration.

Briefly



Extra **half-hourly trams** connecting Newhaven and Edinburgh Airport to Broughton will **run through the night** (02:08–06:14) on Fri and Sats from 2–24 Aug. We wish you many happy returns.

In early July, a Scottish Reporter dismissed MCD Homes' appeal against the Council's refusal of permission for 19 flats at **21 McDonald PI** (24/03104/FUL). He was unconvinced by inadequate frontage landscaping and the lack of homes for larger families and found 'the likely policy alignment of the proposal with regard to materials and certain amenity matters would not overcome the adverse effects associated with the **height, scale, and massing** of the proposal, the location of the communal entrance door, and the lack of frontage landscaping'. Neighbours and the New Town & Broughton Community Council expect another application soon.

The charitable Carnegie Foundation of New York has backed **Dunard Centre** design and programming to the tune of \$1m. This adds to the £25m in public funds and over £80m in private ones already raised. Tourism spend is **expected to rise** in Edinburgh by £8.6m p.a. once the concert hall opens in 2029 (Issue 352). Given the Dunard's determination to **engage local and underserved community groups**, and given the fact that the CFNY has **around \$4.5bn left** in its endowment account, now may be a good time to invest in a **N Clyde St Lane** kazoo stall.

You read it here first. As anticipated in May (**Issue 351**), Royal London has brought forward plans to upgrade and redevelop its office complex at **1 Thistle St and 2 Queen St** (25/03242/LBC). Morgan Architects have thought long and hard about the structure's design, massing and materiality at this sensitive site. To *Spurtle's* eye, though, the proposed façade with its **bronzed metal cladding** at top and bottom looks like a vanilla ice cream slab wedged between enormous wafers. Still, we support the proposal.

Izar V Lux S. à r.l. has lodged a proposal to connect its development fronting **Fettes Row** and **Dundas St** to **King George V Park** with a new path (25/02364/FUL). It includes a timber bench and 'feature tree' with bulb planting. Some locals are confused by potential **surface treatments** and others worry that there's too little in the plan to prevent cyclists hurtling downhill into unwary walkers and/or their dogs.

Officials have refused **AME Zee's plans** for a 4-bdrm annexe in the garden of Abbotsford Guesthouse at **36 Pilrig St**. Some 23 residents and Leith Central Community Council objected.

Moreover ...



Santu has added a new coffee bar (8am–4pm) to its existing green-coffee-import business and **roastery** in the former Washhouse and Printmakers' Workshop premises at **23 Union St.** Santu buys its coffee from personally known specialty farmers in the **Espirito Santo region** of Brazil and roasts it onsite in Edinburgh. Our review will follow.

Councillors have voted in favour of a motion by Cllr Danny Aston calling for a report on whether to declare a **moratorium on purpose-built student accommodation** in the city. Officers will present their findings to the Planning Cmte in Sept. City-Centre **Cllr Joanna Mowat** advised against overloading officials with more work when much of the relevant information is already to be presented later this year as part of the **Local Development Plan**.

School dates till Christmas.—Autumn term: Wed 13 Aug; Mid-term break 1: Mon 15 Sept; Mid-term break 2: Mon 13–Mon 20 Oct; Autumn term ends: Fri 19 Dec.

By the time the 18 July deadline passed for comments on revised **New Town Quarter** proposals (Issue 352), 368 public comments had been lodged: 365 of them objecting, 1 supporting. In theory, the **Development Management Sub-Cmte** will reach a determination by 3 Oct, but we expect it to take longer.

Pret à Manger will open a branch soon at **335 St James Cres** (the duller end where Peloton once peddled stationary cycling experiences). This follows the café chain's recent arrival on **Shrub PI**. Elsewhere, AVIS aims to open a new car-hire outlet on Level 2 of the **OMNi Centre** car park.

Who, having watched the Beatles' separate arrivals at 4 adjacent homes in *Help!* (1965, 'Lovely boys and so natural' [bit.ly/hlpJPGR]) has not fantasied about discreetly joining their own flat to the one next door? A **Cumberland St** resident proposes something similar by knocking down a party wall to turn their 1-bdrm, 1-bthrm home into a 3-bdrm, 3-bthrm one with an extra living room (25/03122/LBC). On this occasion, the plans restore the *original proportions* of a single top-floor home.

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We're here to represent your views – from planning to clean streets and green spaces.



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NEXT MEETING AT
7pm ON 18th AUGUST
IN McDONALD ROAD LIBRARY

Foyso Choudhury MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region



As your Lothian MSP I want to listen, take action and make a lasting difference.

I hold regular advice surgeries for constituents to raise any issue directly, to book an appointment please contact me:

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