

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

**November
2025**

No 356

Tel: 07455 770474

spurtle@hotmail.co.uk

WEATHER NOT SO AMIABLE

Storm Amy reached Edinburgh on the weekend of 4–5 October, with 80mph winds causing power cuts, travel disruption and widespread damage to trees and buildings. Dusherra 2025, the Scottish Indian Arts Forum's annual flagship event on Calton Hill, was cancelled for safety reasons.

Police closed Royal Crescent to through traffic for several days after a chimney pot crashed onto the road and a car below. Other parts of the structure fell through an adjacent building's roof and into the top-floor flat, causing havoc.

Amy was the first named storm of the 2025/26 season. Bram, Chandra, Dave, Eddie, Fionnuala, Gerard, Hannah, Isla, Janna, Kasia, Lilith, Marty, Nico, Oscar, Patrick, Ruby, Stevie, Tadhg, Violet and Wubbo (after the first Dutch astronaut) may follow. You can suggest a name of your own at [bit.ly/wian2526].



FULL STEAM AHEAD



Image: Courtesy of Lyon & Turnbull.

This work, showing the *Royal Scot* and *Flying Scotsman* thundering through Princes St Gardens, was estimated to fetch between £1.5k and £2k in Lyon & Turnbull's auction of travel and vintage posters last month. It was created by that prolific illustrator of planes, trains and automobiles Bryan de Grineau (1883–1957) for the London, Midland & Scottish Railway. LMS ran services from Waverley to Euston and King's Cross between 1923 and 1948, during which time a one-way ticket would, in today's terms, have cost about £140 (3rd class) or £278 (1st class). Sources: *National Railway Museum*; *National Archives currency calculator*; *Bank of England inflation calculator*.

CHOUDHURY INVESTIGATED



The Scottish Labour whip was withdrawn from Foysool Choudhury MBE MSP (Lothian Region) in late Sept, pending an independent investigation into alleged 'inappropriate conduct'. For the time being, he will sit in Holyrood as an Independent member.

On 29 Sept, Scottish Labour Leader Anas Sarwar MSP told the BBC's *Good Morning Scotland* that he didn't know the nature of the allegation but has confidence in his party's vetting procedures. So far as *Spurtle* is aware, Mr Choudhury has made no public response to any aspect of the development.

A local resident, Choudhury is best known here for his work with the Edinburgh Mela and Forth St-based Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council. Few recall his low-profile membership of the New Town & Broughton Community Council between 2019 and 2021.

Spurtle Issue 355, containing an advertisement for Mr Choudhury as Labour MSP, had gone to press before the story broke.

POLICE NEWS

Police appealed for witnesses after an 81-year-old man was hit by a bus at the corner of Annandale St and Haddington Pl on 28 Sept at around 1.20am. The man later died in hospital. If you have information, quote incident no. 0302.

From mid-Sept to mid-Oct, Pilrig St was one of several high-traffic local thoroughfares where Leith Community police officers and special constables joined traffic police and Council licensing enforcers to check over 100 vehicles. Most were in good order, but offences included driving without insurance and driving with an unrestrained infant. Kindly mute your opinionated bairns.

A festive campaign against drink-driving will start soon, but officers are focusing first to forestall Bonfire Night disorder. Those guys with a track record of trouble at this time of year can expect a visit. Since 22 Oct, police in the capital have been issued with body-worn video cameras and will use them to capture footage of violence and disorder around Halloween and Bonfire Night.

Edinburgh North & Leith's Tracy Gilbert MP joined local officers last month on a drive around Leith highlighting routine anti-social behaviours and police steps to combat them.



CALL TO PROTECT TENANTS

Leith-based Living Rent activists are liaising with Cllr Rae (Ward 12) and officials from Private Rented Sector and Short-Term Let Enforcement to discuss what can and cannot be done to protect tenants in Edinburgh.

In its Aug 2025 report 'Letting Landlords off the Hook' [bit.ly/lloth], the group criticised a perceived lack of Council engagement in holding landlords to account for disrepair, safety hazards, threats and illegal evictions.

Now, in an open letter, it calls for improved:

- funding and resourcing of enforcement
- transparency about complaints, enforcement and application of 'fit-and-proper person' tests for landlords
- proactive use of existing powers to carry out statutory responsibilities, support tenants and tackle rogue landlords
- protection of tenants from retaliatory evictions by disgruntled landlords
- transparent and rigorous application of due diligence to avoid handing 'lucrative' housing contracts to landlords with criminal or tribunal convictions.

Leith Central Community backs the initiative.

Briefly



Image: Freddie Essien.

Reader Freddie Essien is unimpressed by this big beast spotted on **Shrub Pl.** 'Typical Edinburgh Council! Employing contractors to repair **broken pavements** (damaged by illegal parking) and using heavy vehicles to do it.'

The next meeting of the Broughton History Society will be in **McDonald Rd Library** on 10 Nov at 6.30pm. Bruce Keith will talk in depth about '**Scotland Under the Surface**'. The new series of the **Broughton History Society Newsletter** (Issues 1-14), dating back to Jan 2020 can be found online at [bit.ly/BHSns].

Refurbishment of the early 19th-century, B-listed Stockbridge Tap (at the corner of **Raeburn Pl** and **St Bernard's Row**) will involve changes to the door location, windows, signage, exterior finish and internal layout.

A new branch of the mushrooming **CUPP** café chain will open at 14 Leith St. There are already franchises (selling coffee, matcha and boba teas) on **Leith Walk** and **Lothian Rd**, and another 31 across the UK and island of Ireland. How long before the bubble bursts?

Issue 2 of the **Montgomery St Parklife** community magazine will be launched on 12 Nov.

The deadline for funding applications to the annual **Leith Decides** participatory budget exercise has been extended until midnight on **5 Nov 2025**. Proposals from much of Spurtleshire are eligible. See [bit.ly/Ldcds].

Tracy Griffen of Griffen Fitness has begun producing Pure Leith mint tea in **Balfour St**. The whole spearmint leaves (organic, dried, handpicked and packaged in Council-registered space adjacent to the fitness studio) have potential benefits for **health and well-being** when infused. See [bit.ly/PLmtf].

Parking enforcement along **Spey St Lane** has seen multiple vehicles belonging to one person removed.

Broughton St bar and restaurant Rollo was quietly sold in Apr and is now managed by **Fabrice and Alison Bouloup** (formerly of the Barley Bree in Muthill). Look out for a 'freshly imagined Sunday Roast' this autumn and a possible rebrand in 2026.

Tribe Yoga plans to stretch its operations to a fifth studio in the former Sally Salon Services premises at 26 Howe St. As exclusively revealed in June 2015 (Issue 242), TY was first established in the former Margiotta's at **71-75 Northumberland St**. It also runs 2 studios in London.

STOP PRESS: Broughton St was closed to traffic for nearly 4 hours on the morning of **24 Oct**. The measure started at around 6am after a crash involving 2 marked police vehicles, a van and a car. Three officers were **taken to hospital** for assessment but their injuries were not thought to have been serious. As we went to press, enquiries were ongoing 'to establish the full circumstances'.

On your bike: cycle news

(1) Edinburgh Council last month agreed to contribute up to £1.7m for hosting the *Grand Départ* of the 2027 Tour de France. The Scottish Govt will cover additional costs.

(2) Broughton has a long history of organising cycling events which attract little or no public interest (see p.3).

(3) To avoid bicycle-human conflicts behind the floating bus stop, the Council has moved the Elm Row cycle path to the shop-side of the trees (Issue 345 and [bit.ly/ERrow]).

However, the old lane markings remain, misleading cyclists into using the former route and muddling/endangering all concerned. Leith Central Community Council seeks immediate remedial action, new signage and assurances.



Appetite for change

On 21 Oct, the Policy & Sustainability Cmte considered a petition calling for Edinburgh Council's 'commitment to 100% plant-based food for internal catering of meetings and events'.

The petition, which had received 280 signatures between 6 June and 8 Oct, cited the immense impact of animal agriculture on global warming and the environment. It referred in particular to methane emissions (by animals not consumers). It called for the Council to drop meat and dairy products in line with the principle of the Plant-Based Treaty it endorsed in 2023 and its commitment to Net Zero by 2030.

A circuitous and often irrelevant discussion followed in committee before members called for a report on potential pricing incentives and budget implications. To some, it appeared the issue had been kicked into the long grass.

You read it here first

The National Galleries of Scotland last month moved Eduardo Paolozzi's Master of the Universe from Modern 2 on Belford Rd to its garden-level complex in the city centre.

This was a move exclusively predicted by the *Spurtle* back in Aug 2022 (Issue 320), following the sculpture's fleeting appearance in a mock-up video of the then forthcoming exhibition space on/in and under the Mound [bit.ly/SNGviz].

The transfer took 2 days to complete and the expertise of collections management, conservators, curators and 'specialist movers with specialist kit including a crane and gimbal'.

Paolozzi depicted himself in the work as a mechanised version of William Blake's drawn Isaac Newton. Dr Patricia Allerston, NGS Deputy Director & Chief Curator of European and Scottish Art, describes him as 'looking out over the city and facing towards his home town of Leith'. Non-experts will find him looking down at the pavement and facing the Campbell Islands.



Poring over the hill

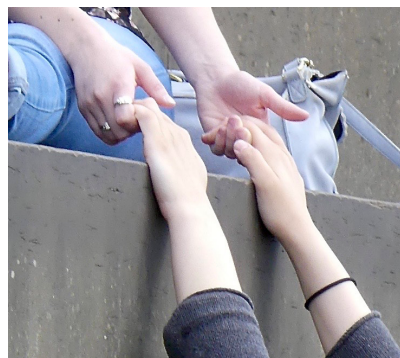
The Calton Hill Conservation Trust met on 1 Nov to discuss, among other matters, 6 new policy objectives.

In summary, these were to: support sustainable visitor access; restore and maintain the hill's physical condition; improve on-site information; improve accessibility for all; protect the hill as a Site of Special Scientific Interest; and establish a nature reserve on the western flank (above Greenside).

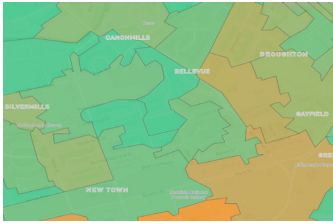
Given the Council's lack of a timely financial response to the hill's Erosion Emergency (Issue 355) – raised by Cllr McFarlane (Ward 11) at last month's Culture & Communities Cmte – CHCT is also considering a fundraiser to pay for urgently needed turfing in Nov and Dec.

CHCT notes that high footfall (an estimated 500k-1m visitors pa) and overcutting of grass have caused erosion. As has less rainfall: 'Figures from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, our nearest weather station, show that we have had 412.8 mm of rain in the past year', only 61% of the average annual rainfall over the previous 10 years.

'Drier summers are predicted by climate change models.'



More trees, please



The Woodland Trust charity believes urban Scotland needs 2.5 million more trees and has produced an online map to illustrate the point.

Urban trees, it argues, 'improve air quality, provide shade and shelter, boost biodiversity, reduce stress and create attractive places to live and work'.

Scotland's average urban canopy cover is 18.8%, but hyperlocal areas vary between 1% and 67%. Healthier and wealthier areas tend to enjoy 40% more tree cover than less fortunate ones.

The WT map marks areas across the UK with a score: 100/100 showing a desirable 'tree equity' has been achieved [bit.ly/WTTreeeq]. Most data zones covering Spurtleshire range from 92 to 100. Bellevue, Broughton and Gayfield score 83–89.

The First New Town, where some heritage buffs oppose planting along George St, scores only 64. That is the lowest level of tree equity in Edinburgh apart from Leith Docks and Seafield. Too much *urbe* and not enough *rus*?

Edinburgh has a composite score of 88, compared to Aberdeen's 84, Glasgow's 80, Dundee's 79 and Stirling's 77.

WT's facts and figures in this format are a useful tool for communities to understand and improve their environments. However, the numbers don't capture public access to trees or qualify what kind of species make up the canopy.

Spurtle welcomes Edinburgh's ambition to complete planting an additional 250k trees between 2020 and 2030 [bit.ly/EHecodreams] but is concerned about possible over-representation of too few varieties of fast-growing and inexpensive species, and about insufficient Council resources to maintain them.

New points on Edinburgh heritage

Cllr Graham (Ward 11), Convenor of the Culture & Communities Cmte, has asked officers to prepare a report on developing an additional Edinburgh Heritage Strategy.

Going beyond the built environment (already covered by the Council and Edinburgh World Heritage), the new proposal would include 'wide-ranging social, natural, and industrial heritage at local and citywide levels'. All very admirable.

It would operate using a 'user-friendly framework of co-operation between the Council and Edinburgh's communities'. Aye, right. Stifled keckles.

Similar Birmingham and Stirling strategies could serve as models. Like everything else in the capital – underground bins, Olympic Games, Morningside Moon colonies – the Visitor Levy could in theory pay for it.

A report is expected in early 2026.



Local impact of road collisions

Department of Transport figures published last month in graphic form list all collisions in the Edinburgh North & Leith constituency last year which caused injury and were reported to the Police.

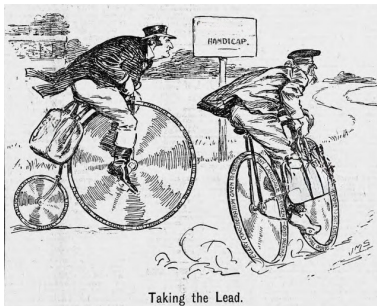
In total there were 111 casualties: one of them fatal, 28 serious, 82 slight.

Spurtleshire accounted for 20 of the non-fatal incidents, with black spots at Leith Walk (8: 5 of them involving cyclists), Queen St (5: 4 cyclists), Dundas St (5: 3 cyclists or motorcyclists).

Edinburgh North & Leith figures have fallen since 2003, when 6 fatalities occurred, and 2005, which saw over 400 reported collisions. The Edinburgh constituency with most recorded collisions in 2024 was Edinburgh West (177). It seems probable that 20 mph speed limits have helped continue this trend. Unreported collisions are not reflected in the DoT figures.

Twenty-five mile bicycle race in Edinburgh

From the Daily Review, 10.7.1880:—Last night a twenty-five mile bicycle handicap took place over the Royal Gymnasium course. The race was open, but only four competitors entered.



These were—D. Stanton, London; R Patricks, Wolverhampton; H. Daniels, Birmingham; and W. M'Kenzie, Kirkcaldy—the two last named being allowed three minutes' start.

On being sent off, M'Kenzie quickly drew away from Daniels, and covered 5 laps in the three minutes. Stanton and Patricks then made the running for M'Kenzie, who was still increasing his distance from Daniels.

When Daniels was overtaken by the two scratch men, he retired, having covered 7 miles 1 lap in the first half-hour; and a few minutes afterwards, Stanton and Patrick, made up the allowance they

had given M'Kenzie. The latter, however, continued to ride pluckily, and kept the saddle till the finish.

The two others ran a neck-and-neck race throughout, there being at no time 10 yards separating them; and at the close, after a fine spurt, Stanton came in first, only a couple of yards in advance of Patricks, the time being 1 hour 34 minutes 58 seconds. M'Kenzie finished with 22 miles 5 laps.

The attendance of spectators was very small.

Briefly



Image: Robin Mair.

The 10th annual **Diwali (Festival of Light)** celebration is scheduled for 2 Nov, starting in **St Andrew Sq** with a procession of 150 performers along **George St** and further events in **W Princes St Gardens**. Expect vibrant music, dance, food and fireworks.

In a bid to hurry along Council progress on restoring the 2 decorative benches on **Leith Walk** (Issue 354), Gayfield Assoc chair Neil Gilmour is treating officers and the *Spurtle* to what may loosely be described as poetry. His latest effort reads: 'The space by our railings is still there/Rather lonely and sad and quite bare/Since the benches were lifted/And no substitute gifted/We're all standing around in the Square.' Please, Edinburgh Council, **make it stop**.

As far as we're aware, there are no short-term lets along **Inverleith Ter** (at least, no authorised ones under the new framework), but a recent Licensing application for 8 potential visitors to a flat off a common stair there has worried some neighbours. They are organising objections.

Carlton and Regent Ter residents report their tranquillity being disturbed by buses and coaches parked on Regent Rd with **engines idling**; vehicles of all kinds using Regent Rd at **excessive speed**. There are calls for improved enforcement of regulations.

Piri Piri Chicken's controversial application for longer trading hours at **38 Elm Row** (Issue 355) achieved partial success. In a spirit of compromise, it has been licensed to operate until midnight instead of 1am and 2am. Local residents we've spoken to are still clucking annoyed.

There are straws in the wind that **Essential Edinburgh** (the business-led management team covering the city-centre Business Improvement District) may consider overseeing **Picardy Pl's** Fantasy Island. Some would welcome such additional commitment and funds. Others recall EE's record of rough magic and airy charms in **St Andrew Sq** and baulk. Meanwhile, we understand dead trees in **Picardy Pl** will be replaced as part of a wider contract for the whole tramway extension.

A favourable review of **Campaigning for Edinburgh: The Cockburn Association 1875–2049** appeared online last month. *Spurtle's* Caroline Roussot summarised it as a 'fascinating overview of urbanism and the development of the city'. Read the piece in full here [bit.ly/cockhist].

The boarded-up 1-bdrm flat on the ground floor at **32 Broughton Rd** has been on the market for offers over £130k. We suspect potential squatters made such **impressive security** for the front door and street-facing windows necessary.

Moreover ...



Council officers have consulted the **New Town & Broughton Community Council** on making permanent the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order changes to the junction of **Bellevue** and **Cornwallis Pl.** NTBCC welcomes the overall scheme but is concerned about possible localised flooding.

A small café with space for 5 covers is proposed at **38 Rodney St** (25/05083/FUL). The premises were upgraded and 'occupied' in 2023 by the dormant Bathroom Boutique Scotland Ltd.

On local journalist Kenny Farquharson's substack **The Jaggy Thistle** (29 Sept), he discussed 'Two books about tyranny': Jonathan Freedland's *The Traitor's Circle* and Allan Massie's *A Question of Loyalties* [bit.ly/2bkstyr]. When and how do individuals respond to the gradual collapse of **democratic norms**? What cost are they prepared to pay for themselves and loved ones? How resilient is principle? What becomes of trust? **It made for compelling and uncomfortable reading.**

A haze has settled on vacant premises at **38 E Claremont St.** There may be a vague connection to the defunct Haze Vapours on **Albert Pl**, but we await clarification.

Readers interested in tracking progress on the **Broughton to Newhaven** tramline extension snag-list should visit the website at [bit.ly/trmsngs]. By 23 Sept, **82 out of 866** issues had been fixed and another 51 were in progress. Community Councils Together on Trams understands the route's final road safety audit will take place this month, subject to 'availability of the necessary external resources'.

BP20 Ltd aims to refurbish **20 Broughton Pl** and change it from a Class 7 hostel to a 9-bdrm Class 7 aparthotel. The **A-listed townhouse** – lacking many original features – was on the market earlier this year for offers over £1.2m.

Leith Central Community Council will remove its much vandalised noticeboard from Leith Walk. It will instead post information in the windows of **McDonald Rd Library**.

New Town & Broughton Community Council will write to the Council seeking action to address professional and amateur **cyclists on footways** using machines of any kind. Education campaigns through schools and social media could help, but **new primary legislation** from Holyrood may also be needed to bolster current **Highway Code** provisions for bicycles, horses, asses, sheep, mules, swine and cattle on pavements.

Rumours that a fourth Kinloch pigeon had disappeared from **Elm Row** in Oct proved to be groundless. We suspect confusion with the **theft of items** from a museum in France.

Spurtle Team: E. Brown, P. Cockburn, E. Dickie, C. Ellis, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, V. Kirby, A. McIntosh, S. Michael, M. Orr, W. Quinn, C. Roussot, E. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.

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Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament
for Edinburgh Northern
and Leith Constituency



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Lorna Slater MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament
for Lothian Region



You can contact me by:

✉ Lorna.Slater.MSP@parliament.scot

✉ MG.14 The Scottish Parliament, EH99 1SP

☎ 0131 348 6997

You can find me on:

📷 @lornagreens

🐦 @lornaslater.bsky.social

✂ @lornaslater

📺 @LornaSlaterMSP



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Leith Central Community Council

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NEXT MEETING AT
7pm ON 17 NOVEMBER
IN McDONALD ROAD LIBRARY

Tracy Gilbert MP

Member of Parliament for
Edinburgh North and Leith

✉ tracy.gilbert.mp@parliament.uk

f Tracy Gilbert

X tracygilbert72

📷 tracygilbertmp

👑 Tracy Gilbert

Member of Parliament for
Edinburgh North and Leith



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