

Spurtle



Find us at: www.broughtonspurtle.org.uk



BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

**August
2026**

No 364

Tel: 07455 770474

spurtle@hotmail.co.uk

BRIDGE CLOSED FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE

An informal inspection of Powderhall Foot-bridge on 21 June discovered 'splitting along the grain of the timber in the top chord at the connections'. For reasons of public safety, it was closed on 24 June until 'suitable repairs or replacement' are implemented.

The public pushed temporary barriers aside and continued using the bridge. Not until 17 July, 3 weeks and 2 days later, did officials install secure fencing and lock the St Mark's Path gate to prevent access. This was an unpardonably slow response if genuine danger existed.



The Council does not insure its bridges but is investigating the defects here to see whether it is covered by any warranties. The bridge's manufacturer, Dodson Macrae (Hardwood Structures) Ltd, was dissolved in 2025.

Hardwood construction

The bridge is made from the tropical hardwood Ekki. When built in 2008, officials said it had an estimated design-life of 120 years. Various 'engineering', 'ad-hoc' and 'visual' inspections of the structure have been undertaken 12 times since 2013. How long it will take to fix or replace the bridge, and how much it will cost, remain to be seen.

In recent years, wooden structures like this

have been an attractive option for aesthetic, ecological and cost reasons, and for their supposed durability and low maintenance needs.

But there can be problems. The Environment Agency built 5 timber bridges across the Jubilee River (Berkshire and Buckinghamshire) in around 2000, all of which have since collapsed or required significant repair or replacement.

The causes varied from internal wood decay (undetected by visual inspections) to unauthorised overloading, systemic design and material flaws, and structural disconnection between the main beams and vertical posts/diagonal braces.

Unpredictable failure

In the case of the Powderhall bridge, Mott MacDonald's inspection found that failure of a key node would likely lead to total loss of the span. Such a failure could occur at any time due to 'high live loading, environmental actions such as unusually hot weather, or under dead load after further deterioration'.

Closure of the bridge is a serious inconvenience for users with no adequate diversion route, and an existential threat to the nearby coffee kiosk on Broughton Rd. However, the report noted, 'Where the probability of an event is uncertain, but where the possible consequences of the event are severe and well understood, Health & Safety guidance ... places emphasis on addressing the consequences as a priority, before then better understanding the probability of the event occurring.' In other words, better safe than sorry. For the full text, see Update (22.7.26) at [\[bit.ly/SpBrdgnws\]](http://bit.ly/SpBrdgnws).

NEW TOWN QUARTER WINS ON APPEAL

The Scottish Govt's Reporter is minded to approve purpose-built student accommodation as part of the 'New Town Quarter' between Dundas St and King George V Park.

Consent will follow the formality of a Section 75 legal agreement between the Council and developer Izar V Lux S. à r. L and Fusion.

News that the Reporter had upheld the developer's appeal came in late June, just after our Issue 363 had gone to press. The overall scheme is for 315 residential units, PBSA accommodation for 591 individuals, office and other commercial uses.

The concentration of so many students will pose challenges for existing residents and shared infrastructure. Some 447 individuals and organisations had objected to the proposal by the

time it came before the Council's Development Management Sub-Cmte in Dec 2025. Many of them are now angry and disappointed.

For Spurtle's most recent coverage of the subject and details about how developer contributions will go towards education, footway/roadway improvements and affordable housing, see [\[bit.ly/SpNTQnws\]](http://bit.ly/SpNTQnws).



Stale joke over the top



Image: Ceci n'est pas un chapeau.

New Town & Broughton Community Council took to social media last month deploring the summer-craze conification of capital art. 'Please respect our beautiful city!' it pled. 'Putting cones on historical statues damages delicate works, costs the Council (you!) money and ruins the experience for people who've travelled thousands of miles to visit Edinburgh.' Some locals have railed against such 'hackneyed Weegie tropes' and 'pathetic displays of vandalism'. Others have turned to more nuanced accounts of 'themed decoration', 'deposition of objects' and 'The Joke of Wellington' [\[bit.ly/TJoW\]](http://bit.ly/TJoW). The phenomenon would probably dwindle sooner if fewer cones were left lying around long after they've served their purpose.

INCREASED COSTS TAKE THE BISCUIT

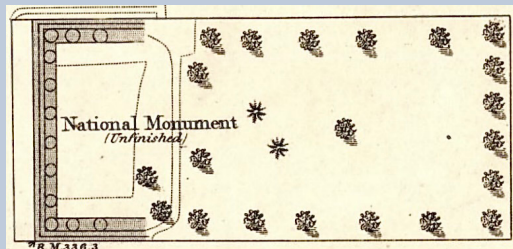
Bellevue's Smart Cookies After School Club, serving 55 children and dozens of families across north and central Edinburgh, faces imminent closure. Increased operating costs and a proposed rent rise of over 20% for space within Broughton St Mary's Parish Church have caused the crisis.

A Lib-Dem motion carried at June's full Council meeting called for continued engagement by officials to seek alternative affordable arrangements for the group.

It was noted that Smart Cookies, established here in 2015, not only helps adults remain in work but enhances community cohesion and inclusivity by mixing individuals from both Broughton and St Mary's RC Primary Schools. It was also recognised that similar financial difficulties beset other after-school clubs across Edinburgh.

Officers will report progress to the Education, Children & Families Cmte in Sept.

Briefly



On the **Calton Hill Conservation Trust** website, Simon Holledge examines trees around the National Monument. Planting, which outlined the **proposed completed structure**, began between 1852 and 1877 and remained in large part until the mid-1980s. Perhaps 3 examples survive today. **Should trees here be reintroduced?** See [\[bit.ly/CHCTTs\]](https://bit.ly/CHCTTs).

Deirdre French tells us she recently asked an AI tool to **define differences** between the *Broughton Spurtle* and a well-known mainstream publication. AI replied, 'The primary difference is their scope and scale: **the New York Times** is a massive, globally influential commercial newspaper, while the *Broughton Spurtle* is a small, volunteer-run hyperlocal community paper covering a single square mile in Edinburgh, Scotland.' We hope that dispels any confusion.

By the time you read this, **3 mature elms** may already have been felled in the grounds of **Drummond CHS**. As first reported in April 2025 (Issue 349), the health of trees here has long been of concern. **Eleven others** are being monitored.

The number of Council **special uplift slots** (for removal of bulky items) increased by 134 in mid-June, and further weekend slots were introduced at the end of last month. The **average wait for an uplift** in the previous 12 months was 16 days.

On 2 July, a new **City Centre Policing Unit**, part-funded for 3 years by the 5% Visitor Levy, began patrolling in Edinburgh. Costing the Council £2.8m pa (for staff, match-funded by Police Scotland), the CCPU comprises **1 inspector, 3 sergeants and 45 constables**. The aim is to 'make the city centre safer for all those who live, work and visit', not including hooligans, shoplifters and international pickpockets. **Police resources from SE Edinburgh** will cover operational gaps resulting elsewhere in the capital.

In May, responsibility for planting in **Picardy PI** shifted from the Trams to Newhaven team to Edinburgh's Parks Dept. By early July, **all traces of vegetation** bar trees had been cleared from the face of the earth. We await developments.

Edinburgh Council last month approved a motion by **Cllrs Booth and Caldwell (Wards 13 and 12)** calling on the Transport Convenor to write to the new Scottish Govt Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism & Transport. He will ask whether the SNP Administration will engage with the Council in ongoing constructive negotiations about the **Powderhall Corridor** (Issue 363) and if funding will be made available to facilitate next steps. In other news, **Network Rail** last month responded to campaigners' freedom of information request and clarified that it has **'no plans or investment'** to retain for railway use any of the land, which would preclude its potential sale to Edinburgh Council [\[bit.ly/PLftr\]](https://bit.ly/PLftr).

Second proposal for Forth Street

The application by Limetree Developments (West) to convert office spaces at 16–26 Forth St into an apart-hotel (26/00661/LBC) has been amended.

Responding to comments by Historic Environment Scotland, LDW has reduced the number of hotel units from 90 to 53. This would allow retention of principal rooms' layout and proportions on the ground and first floors, and exposure of their original ceilings. Additional 'hotel-type' facilities are planned for the lower ground floor.

The developer argues that the new proposal's less intense use of the site would address many of the concerns raised by locals (Issue 360). The maximum number of guests would fall, we estimate, to about 90. Notably, however, the apart-hotel would not provide new homes in a city suffering a self-declared 'Housing Emergency', and concerns remain about 'new short-term lets by stealth'.

As is normal in such cases, the 45 people who objected to the original plans by the deadline of 27 Mar will have no opportunity to respond to the latest version. It is unclear when elected members will determine the case, but the Picardy Residents Assoc and NTBCC will send deputations in due course.

Waverley Valley plan still half-baked

New Town & Broughton Community Council voiced doubts about the future of George Street, Princes Street and the Waverley Valley at their July meeting. Various members said:

- Architect Richard Murphy's proposals are a 'refreshing' basis for conversation, but do not respect the area's architectural heritage.
- Further consultation is needed to understand, prioritise and, if possible, reconcile a wide range of competing aspirations from stakeholders. This will take years rather than months.
- Reviving retail on Princes St is impossible. A new model and sense of purpose is needed beyond Black Sheep cafés, Harry Potter outlets and tartan tat for tourists.
- Careful study of successful European models is required.
- The contradictory demands on Princes St as a place for people and as a transport corridor, including the future design of Waverley Station, must be resolved.
- Prompt progress on formulating a plan is important before what's left of historic Princes St lies in ashes.
- The lack of clear consultative, goal-setting and decision-making processes must be addressed.

With Planning officials set to report in Sept on the results of their consultative 'workshop' earlier this year, NTBCC's Chair will tell them more work is needed before any overall vision and practical way forward can be established.



Keeping the wall between us as we go

Readers may remember how, in Issue 363, we reported a New Town householder's wish to bring their A-listed property up to date with 'contemporary lifestyles' by creating new doors between rooms. That application has since been withdrawn.

Perhaps the change of plan reflects even more modern lifestyles which, rather than valuing 'connected spaces that flow together', prefers good walls making good neighbours. We base this speculation on a separate proposal made last month by a different New Town householder who seeks to restore a former partition between their A-listed kitchen and sitting room, reinstate a traditional vestibule screen and subdivide their existing en-suite and dressing room. 'In general', they conclude, 'the proposal moves the character towards its original form.'

Wild wood in the city centre

The Calton Hill Conservation Trust and Council officials are discussing possible formation of a Local Nature Reserve on the steep wooded slope overlooking Greenside.

Self-seeded trees here include: ash, wych elm, sycamore, field maple, rowan, hazel, cherry, hawthorn, elder, privet, holly, silver birch and downy birch. Although no formal survey has been completed, it is established that as well as birds and invertebrates, there are present: badger, bat (common and soprano pipistrelle, and Daubenton's), brown rat, field vole, fox, grey squirrel, house mouse, lesser weasel, mole, rabbit, roe deer and wood mouse. That list exceeds the named species in *The Wind in the Willows* but (so far) lacks hedgehog, otter, stoat, ferret, water vole, toad and Pan.

Trust members made a written deputation to the Culture & Communities Cmte in May, recommending creation of the Reserve. Since then, they have met officers on-site who will report back to elected members in due course.



Image: Project Gutenberg [\[bit.ly/WWPrGt\]](https://bit.ly/WWPrGt)

Caroline Gerard – a bonnie fechter (deceased)

The redoubtable Caroline Gerard died suddenly on 9 July.

A professional genealogist, Gerard expertly led many locals on tours about the Dean Village and Dean Cemetery. She did most to establish, animate and propel the Friends of Warriston Cemetery who, since 2013, have achieved wonders in restoring that green commemorative space after years of neglect.

Gerard's investigation of 19th-century Edinburgh's social history produced countless insightful gems, delivered with laconic wit in print or from behind clouds of cigarette smoke. She was unhurriable, unapologetic and often furious. She did not suffer fools gladly, in particular officials promoted beyond their level of competence.

For all Gerard's performative flourish, forthright manner and bracing refusal to beat about the bush, she had a generous heart. She loved nature and had a fierce sense of natural justice. In both her professional pursuits and private enthusiasms, she looked Death square in the eye and will have been not in the least bit daunted by His arrival or her own demise.

She is survived by partner Paul.—AM



Briefly



There is a buzz about **Rodney St** these days, helped since 15 July by the arrival at No. 16 of the **Edinburgh Honey Co.** The firm offers small batches of raw, unheated and unfiltered honey originating from family-run hives in **E Lothian, W Lothian and Poland**, as well as infusions, combs, tea, soaps, creams and 'bee products'. Find out more at [bit.ly/4vMZabD]. This is EHC's third outlet, the other two being on **Easter and Morningside Rds.**

Meanwhile, Fuel will open soon at **10 Rodney St**, offering 'real food made fresh'. The business is a close relation of the **Açai Bros Health Bar** which not long ago operated in the same premises.

St Andrew's & St George's Church on George St proposes fixing 2.5-metre high banners at either end of the portico. One gives the name (adopted since the 2024 union with Greenside Parish Church): **Edinburgh New Town Church**. The other summarises what goes on inside: 'CHURCH MUSIC PAUSE MEET COFFEE SCONES TALK LISTEN QUESTION'. Notably, no 'SNOOZE'.

Congratulations to **All Together Edinburgh**, which celebrates its 15th anniversary this summer. In its shop at **87 Leith Walk**, the charity offers training opportunities for adults with learning difficulties, allowing them to gain **confidence, work skills and a qualification**. It's a valuable community asset which deserves your support.

At the last Transport & Environment Cmte, **Cllr Neil Gardiner (Ward 2)** moved that officers investigate a potential graffiti art festival in the city with a focus on building up local artists, working with local children and **promotion of tolerance zones**. *Spurtle* supports efforts to reduce damage to historic monuments and thinks tolerance zones across the **Pentland Hills (Ward 2)** are an excellent idea.

After recent antisocial and sometimes violent behaviour on the **North Edinburgh Path Network**, Cllr Osler (Ward 5) has called for officers, cross-party members, Police and relevant local stakeholders to **workshop concerns and potential countermeasures** in a report to the Culture & Communities and Transport & Environment Cmtes. Included will be an exploration of conflict between **different kinds of user**, and proposals for a permanent maintenance programme balancing plant growth with clear access and effective lighting.

Daytime TV programme makers seek Broughton residents 'going through a life transition, considering downsizing, or feeling overwhelmed by inherited items' whose existence might be **improved by an auctioneer**. If you're sufficiently desperate, contact [stvstudios.com/take-part].

Wrong, confusing, outdated

In Issue 363 we called for local examples of poor signage that would further annoy *Spurtle* contributor David Sterratt. Readers obliged.

John Riley noted how, almost 2 years after the ban on left turns from Leith Walk into London Rd was lifted, the sign shown here still implies otherwise. He says it could not be more unhelpful for the many visitors unfamiliar with the area. The sign also implies that the route west goes via Leith St, which it doesn't. Despite contacting the Council several times, Riley has had no meaningful response.

Kathy Knowles is perplexed by a 20 mph speed limit sign for footway users on the N side of Broughton Pl. It seems to encourage misuse rather than to slow drivers.

Colin Leslie points to a Lothian Regional Council sign outside Warriston Playing Fields on Inverleith Row. LRC ceased to exist in 1996.



Palm Houses to reopen

The Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh confirmed last month that the A-listed Palm Houses will reopen in Oct. The 5-year project has seen work across 600m² and installation of over 5k climate-change-resistant panes. Although £58m will be spent on the overall biomes project [bit.ly/RGBEbiomes], there are no plans for elaborate indoor seating: it has long been established that people in glass houses shouldn't stow thrones. In other news, tickets for the RBGE's Christmas at the Botanic – including a 'glowing Light Sphere, giant Peonies and a field of Stars' – went on sale on 7 July.

Call for bright ideas

Edinburgh's City Plan 2040 will establish a 10-year strategy to establish how planning-development decisions are made for the capital. It aims to be 'place-based', 'people-centred' and 'delivery-focused', which will at least please those who enjoy hyphens [bit.ly/CP2040dps].

The Scottish Govt is assessing whether the Council's evidence base is sufficient to continue drafting the Plan. Meanwhile, there is a 3-month 'call for ideas' from members of the public, community bodies and organisations. It will not be limited to suggestions for particular development sites or types of development.

One example of an 'idea' is establishing a metric to determine the desired proportion of homes and businesses in a neighbourhood that can be converted to hotel use.

New Town & Broughton Community Council's next meeting (at 7pm on 10 Aug in Broughton St Mary's Parish Church), will focus on inviting and discussing such initiatives. All locals are welcome to attend and to add their ha'penny worths..

Those who can't attend but would still like to recommend a former friend's home for demolition and redevelopment should visit [bit.ly/CP2040con].



Moreover ...



Earlier this summer, our photo of fake flowers outside the Gleneagles Townhouse in **St Andrew Sq** prompted local irritation. Elizabeth Brown's email speaks for many: 'Not a pretty sight! It's just another form of littering, for which they should be fined! Such artificial **so-called floral displays**, which are lacking in taste, should not be allowed in a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**! Not only on the grounds of appearance (fading out-of-season blooms, gathering dust, festooning a fine historic building), but also overuse of plastic, which should be discouraged for the sake of the planet. **A few plant-pots with living plants** would be an improvement, but perhaps keeping them watered would be too much to ask?'

Duncan Thomson, a visionary champion of artist Phoebe Traquair's work, has retired as Chair of the **Mansfield Traquair Trust** after 30 years. See [bit.ly/DTMTT30].

New at **22 Howe St** is Cabbage, selling 'beautiful homewares, clothing and vintage finds for a creative home'. No snails allowed.

Following the Debenham's fire on **Princes St** and the interruption of tram services to the **city centre and Leith**, Voi Bikes have added 200 cycles to their 1k-strong Edinburgh fleet. Meanwhile, George St Fringe shows will be moved to pop-up sites within **St Andrew Sq**. *Spurtle* has misgivings about this, in particular about the risk of hurried decisions resulting in damaged trees.

Funds of up to £5k for new community projects are available under the **Leith Chooses** scheme. Contrary to its name and website wording, also eligible are entries from **Broughton, Easter Rd, Hillside, Newhaven, Pilrig and Powderhall**. The application process begins this month with voting in Jan 2027. Details at [www.leithchooses.net].

Officers are considering how operational performance in **clearing weeds across the city** could be reported in future waste and cleaning reports. It's a good idea which would **not take much time**.

Spurtle Team: E. Brown, P. Cockburn, E. Dickie, C. Ellis, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, V. Kirby, A. McIntosh, S. Michael, H. Muir, M. Orr, W. Quinn, C. Roussot, E. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.
Post: Broughton Spurtle, c/o The Yard, 61-3 Broughton Street, EH1 3RJ.
Printed by Edinburgh Copy Shop, 52 St Mary's Street.



THE DRAWING ROOM
GENTLEMEN'S HAIRSTYLIST
23B DUNDAS STREET
TEL. 07565 208767
MON-FRI, 10AM-6PM; SAT, 10-3PM
BY APPOINTMENT OR WALK IN

Prices	
Haircut	£27
Clipper all over	£20
Back and side	£20
Beard trim	£10
Senior	£20
Boys 12 & under	£20
Ear & nose wax	£10

LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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



Follow us online, come along to a meeting, or email us directly at secretary@leithcentralcc.co.uk

NEXT MEETING AT
7pm on 17th AUGUST
IN McDONALD ROAD LIBRARY

TRY BRIDGE!

New to Bridge? Come and give it a go!

Friendly taster sessions for complete beginners

Cards, conversation, strategy – and a relaxed way to learn something new.

Who: Complete beginners and anyone curious about bridge

Choose a session:

♥ 10 August, 7-9pm

♣ 15 September, 1-3pm

Where: Carlton Bridge Club, 368 Warriston Gardens, Edinburgh EH3 5NE

Bring: Just yourself – no experience needed

Everyone is welcome!

Register your interest at:
classes@carltonbridge.co.uk

Scottish Bridge
Play • Learn • Belong



YOUR ROAD TO RECOVERY

Injured through no fault of your own?

We help people across Scotland recover compensation following:

- Road Traffic Accidents
- Workplace Accidents
- Medical Negligence
- Professional Negligence

FREE CLAIM ASSESSMENT
NO WIN NO FEE AVAILABLE

0800 208 4980
accidentScotland.com
SCOTLAND-WIDE REPRESENTATION



SCAN FOR FREE ADVICE
or visit accidentScotland.com

Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith Constituency



HERE TO HELP

I am here to serve and represent you, as your local, active, constituency MSP (Member of the Scottish Parliament) for Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith.

Please get in touch if there's anything you'd like assistance with or to discuss – issues, concerns, ideas and feedback. My team and I are here to help all – no matter who you vote for in elections.

Please see below for details of my monthly 'help and advice surgeries'. These are times when anyone in our area can come and speak with me.

Local | Experienced | Reliable

HELP AND ADVICE SURGERIES

(no appointment is necessary, please just turn up)

FIRST Friday of the month:

2:00PM
Craigintony Community Centre
9 Loaning Road, EH7 6JE
3:30PM
Piershill Library
30 Piersfield Terrace, EH8 7BQ

LAST Friday of the month:

11:00AM
Out of the Blue Drill Hall
36 Dalmeny Street, EH6 8RG
3:30PM
Leith Library
28-30 Ferry Road, EH6 4AE

- AND -

I serve and represent

Leith, Western Harbour, Pilrig, Bellevue, Hillside, Easter Road, Abbeyhill, Meadowbank, Restalrig, Lochend, Loganlea, Maroonville, Willowbrae, Abercorn, Northfield, Piershill, Seafield, Craigintony, Mountcastle, Duddingston, Holyrood Park
Ben Macpherson MSP ben.macpherson.msp@parliament.scot
www.benmacpherson.scot
0131 248 5797
34 Constitution Street, Leith, EH6 6BS
BenMacSPN
@BenMac



Tracy Gilbert MP
Member of Parliament for Edinburgh North and Leith

Address:
78 The Shore, Leith, EH6 6RA

Email: tracy.gilbert.mp@parliament.uk
Mobile: 07983 191316

Sign up to my newsletter



your
urban sanctuary
in the heart of the new town

quiet calm luxury

discover more at www.lumapilates.co.uk

15 NORTHUMBERLAND STREET NORTH EAST LANE EDINBURGH EH3 6LN