

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

MINISTERS BACK COUNCIL TO DECIDE ON HOTEL

In Issue 260 we reported how old Royal High School developers had approached the Scottish Government in February asking for their latest scaled-down hotel plan to be considered alongside their appeal against City of Edinburgh Council's refusal of a larger hotel proposal.

Ministers replied to Duddingston House Properties/Urbanist Hotels Ltd on 4 April, declining that request since – in the absence of any compelling reason to the contrary – they think the local-authority level is the best one even for such an important decision.

The Reporters have consequently extended the sist (delay) on hearing the appeal for a 147-bedroom hotel until either the latest application for a 127-bedroom hotel is refused or the developers appeal on grounds of non-determination by the Council. CEC has until 20 June to grant or refuse planning permission. In either eventuality, the case will continue.

After Scottish Ministers have so clearly upheld local Planning democracy, it would be regrettable if CEC failed to meet the administrative challenge of considering the application. It is unclear – to us, at least – what effect an election and reconstituted Development Management Subcommittee may have on the timing and decision-making process. See 'Moreover ...', p. 4.

HEADING WEST AND FULL OF HOPE



Katherine Dempsey and Peter Wright (S5 pupils at Drummond CHS) have made it into the last 150 (out of 1,000) applicants for the Sutton Trust's prestigious US summer school programme. They will now travel to Yale for 2 weeks in July to experience life in a US university with follow-up events in London in the autumn. The programme supports students whose only barrier to studying in the USA is paying tuition fees. It offers support with exam revision, helps students find an establishment that best fits them, and assists in identifying scholarships. For more, see our website (1.5.17).

DANCE FOR St STEPHEN'S

A world-renowned Danish choreographer has bought St Stephen's Church and will transform it into a year-round dance venue.

Peter Schlauffuss has been interested in acquiring the building ever since it was put up for sale in 2014 (Issues 227, 232). He has now concluded a deal with the successful purchaser on that occasion, the charitable Benzie's Foundation, and aims to attract local, national and international dance companies to a new theatre-in-the-round.

'I plan to make the Great Hall a world-class theatre, one that will attract productions from leading companies around the world,' says Schlauffuss. 'The ground-floor level and basement area lends itself to many exciting uses moving forward, both cultural and community-based.'

Schlauffuss's other recent purchase in Edinburgh, the Charlotte Baptist Church on Rose Street, will open as a 623-seat main venue with 110-seat studio in July, in time for the Fringe.

Rumours are circulating locally of a third new venue, this time one opening off Leith Walk in time for a performance this summer. For more on Schlauffuss's career see [goo.gl/ipdEpy].



SUPERMARKET-SIZED SHOP FOR CANONMILLS BRIDGE

An application to vary the existing planning consent for 1–6 Canonmills Bridge to create a single commercial unit at ground-floor level has been granted (Ref. 16/03406/FUL; see Issue 257). Notwithstanding 104 objections from members of the public, councillors agreed with officials that the 'proposal complies with the development plan and the relevant non-statutory guidance.

'The proposals will have no impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area. The setting of the neighbouring listed buildings will not be affected by the proposed alternative use of these units.

'The proposal will not result in an unreasonable loss of neighbouring amenity. There are no other material considerations which outweigh this conclusion'.



LEITH WALK WORKS TIMETABLE-ISH

The Leith Walk improvement programme will proceed exactly as follows.

Phase 4 (Iona St–McDonald Rd) will complete in June this year. Phase 5 (McDonald Rd–Montgomery St) will run like clockwork from January–July 2018, subject to the result of an as yet unscheduled public hearing. Phase 6 (Montgomery St–Playhouse) will run from January 2019–December 2019 in the event of no tram-extension approval, or from April 2019–June 2021 if trams get the go-ahead.

There is a further, tiny, possible complication. *Spurtle* hears growing concerns that St James Quarter developers may have overlooked Phase 5 when traffic modelling the 44-week Leith Street closure. In which case ... oh, forget we said anything. It'll probably all be fine as usual.



Briefly

Broughton History Society meets next on 15 May at 7.30pm in Drummond Community High School. **Andrew Grant** will talk about 'Leith at War'.

The deadline for submitting an application to stand in the **General Election on 8 Jun** is 11 May. Get your skates on!

Damage to listed property at 31 Broughton St, caused by a large, privately run bin lorry reversing ineptly into **Broughton St Lane** in Feb, has got worse. A second collision occurred on 30 Mar. **Coping stones have been smashed** and the railings knocked into the basement area. A **laundry lorry** accessing the Holiday Inn crashed at the same spot on 25 April, causing what may be **irreparable damage**. This situation is intolerable.

Broughton St Mary's seek **volunteer gardeners** to weed, tidy and mow for an hour each month. **Non-experts** and **non-members** of the congregation welcome. For details Tel. 557 5051 or 657 2447.

In response to **Cllr Nick Gardner's** letter last month (see Issue 261), **Central Edinburgh Youth Hostel** has removed from its website any mention of free parking in already overcrowded Pilrig St. Meanwhile, **Leith Central Community Council** continues to examine how **controlled parking could be extended** into its area of dense commuter and AirBnB infestation.

Brace! Pile-driving will resume on the Shrub Pl development site at the end of June for 3 months, this time at its **northern end**. LCCC will seek talks with contractors to **minimise disruption**.

Seven teams from a total of 125 entries have made the shortleat to replace the **Ross Bandstand**, create a new visitor centre, and 'subtly update' **W. Princes St Gardens**. Their interim brief is to suggest 'a serious piece of architecture, but one that's also celebratory'. **Concept designs** will be displayed this summer, with a winner announced in Aug. As feared, early assurances that the Ross Development Trust would seek a **low-key and complementary structure** have already given way to talk of '**international recognition**' and a '**landmark pavilion**'. Should we anticipate another Golden Turd?

Malone's, the **hideous beer shack** on Waverley Market's roof is not to everyone's taste. But police say the **style of music** being played and the number of **irritating adults** attracted to the vicinity have rendered it unbearable for the **miscreant youths** who formerly gathered there.

A **Scottish Government Reporter** visited E. Scotland St Lane on 19 Apr to aid determination of the appeal against CEC's enforcement notice relating to unauthorised change of use for a **lock-up garage** [Ref. ENA-23-2116 WS). And breathe. Interesting submissions by both sides can be read at [goo.gl/HCYPGy]. Unpublished '**inflammatory**' **allegations** of vandalism cannot. A decision is expected by 3 Jul.

Leith Street and yawning gulf

Alison Blamire's online letter to the *Spurtle* last month caused no end of controversy (our website 11.4.17).

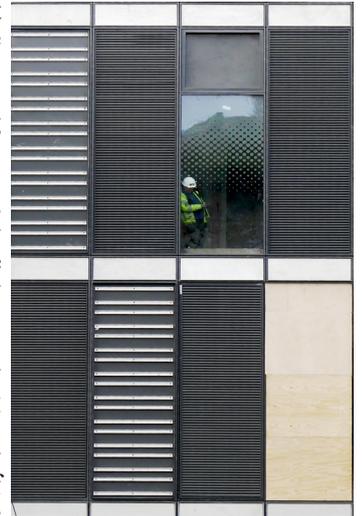
She called for a temporary 'people environment' on Leith Street during its 44-week closure starting in September 2017.

She envisaged pop-up street-food kiosks, seats, planters, and art as seen during the huge King's Cross project in London. She suggested the developer pay for it. She was inspired in part by the success of the community-led experiment at West Crosscauseway in 2007 [goo.gl/gtc4O9].

Pedestrians and cyclists mostly liked her idea. Car drivers angrily dismissed it, some mistakenly thinking her aim was for a permanent redesign along such lines.

The strength of feeling stirred by such mildly worded proposals highlights the yawning gulf between (in their own terms) pragmatic private motorists and practical idealists seeking alternatives to change mindsets.

Blamire says vehicle traffic in the UK rose fivefold between 1950 and 2000, and the trend continues. If she's right, Edinburgh must find effective compromises soon.



McDonald Road upgrade

Following a public consultation last summer (our website 9.8.16), City of Edinburgh Council will make the following 'walk and cycle improvements' on Broughton and McDonald Rds:

- full signalisation of the Broughton Rd/McDonald Rd junction
- zebra crossing to second school entrance on McDonald Rd by Blandfield
- junction tightening and continuous footways across Bellevue Rd, McDonald St, Papermill Wynd, Blandfield and Hopetoun Cres
- tiger crossing (a zebra crossing that can also be used by cyclists) on McDonald Rd at Dryden Ter and Hopetoun St
- new tree planting, where possible, at junction tightening/continuous footways
- general de-cluttering of signs and street furniture, including removal of 'Keep Left' bollards at build-outs.

Detailed designs don't yet exist, and we haven't seen a schedule for implementation. A summary is available at [goo.gl/t2sp4t].

Dangerous downpours

Local resident Peter Verity worries about a 'public danger' on Canon Street – this domestic pipe above head level which has occasionally discharged boiling water onto the pavement since at least 2007.

Verity reckons a ground-floor flat's defective thermostat means that if the immersion heater is left on too long the water reaches 100°C and is released via an overflow pipe to prevent an explosion. The boiling water has melted the tarmac below ... just think what it would do to skin.

The problem has been reported to the police, who passed it to the Council, who passed it to Environmental Health, who describe it as a 'civil matter' and advise contacting the Water Board. 'The Water Board say they have had reports on this in 2007, 2009 and 2010,' says Verity, 'but claim it's the Council who should issue a statutory notice requiring a repair.'

'Isn't it time the buck passing stopped?'



Broughton kids run for their lives

Some 94 pupils have joined parents and staff at Broughton Primary School (BPS) in training hard for five events at the Edinburgh Marathon Festival on 27 May.

They're the biggest school group taking part, and aim to raise £2,500 to refresh 'Golden Time' equipment (rewarding good behaviour with fun activities) and to support those 25% of BPS children living in poverty to take part in educational trips out and about in Edinburgh.

It's a brilliant joint effort by the school community, and deserves our support. Their fundraising page is at [goo.gl/r1gYJP]. Do, please, help if you can. More photos and video on Twitter @bpsrunners



New arrival on welcoming wall

This cheerful wildflower is another of those valiant little plants which miraculously appear and reappear on the walls in East Scotland Street Lane.

We last reported how in 2015, a minute but fully formed sunflower had sprouted in the stonework near the great bay tree of the south allotment. Are the seeds the gift of the winds or otherwise bestowed by birds?

The latest arrival sits near the entrance to the north allotments and is the yellow corydalis or rock fumewort (also fumitory), a perennial in the poppy family papaveraceae.

It is widely distributed, but originally native to the foothills of the Italian and Swiss Alps. The primrose-yellow flowers flourish from late spring to early autumn. Reader Maggie Holland tells us it also grows on the old wall outside the Scottish Malt Whisky Society on Giles Street in Leith.— *JRM*



Briefly



Last month we reported the **presence of pheasants**. Locals now tell us the pair have been seen together across the neighbourhood. This photo shows the female, who has also been **making herself comfortable** in reader Stuart Armstrong's windowbox.

TH Real Estate seek urgently to attach 3 temporary **tilt meters with prisms** to the Sasines Building and 1 to the Register House. They aim to **'establish baselines'** prior to excavating the new St James Quarter's 12–20 metre deep **basement**. The equipment will monitor the structures' normal range of movement (due, for example, to **thermal expansion** in sunshine) and be removed once it is clear they haven't collapsed.



Katie McMeekan's contender for **Edinburgh's meanest pavement** (E. Claremont St Lane, Issue 261) has been beaten already. Michael Ironside says the **tight squeeze** on N St Andrew Lane is 3cm narrower. **Can you do better?**

Closure and reconstruction of the setted road at **Queen St Gardens West** is expected to be complete by 31 May. Until then, there will be no right turn from Hanover St into Queen St, but right turns will be allowed from **Queen St into Queen St Gardens East**.

After consultations with locals, CEC officials seem inclined to build a **pedestrian refuge in Pilrig St** near the junction with Dryden St. Good news, but expect to wait at least 12 months for it to appear.

Comments are sought on the 'Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Draft Management Plan (2017–22)' **by 5 June**. See [goo.gl/AfAY94].

Spurtle's **Leith Walk ward hustings** took place on 12 Apr with 7 of the 9 candidates present. A question asking **'What's the most surprising thing about you?'** elicited entertaining responses, including: a fondness for **belly-dancing** and **Thunderbirds tom-tom-pounding danger-music**; unaccompanied international travel **from the age of 13**; a penchant for banana-and-tuna sandwiches; being able to **strip an AK47**; a motorbike trip that took **5 years longer than expected** and ended in marriage. For how they fared, see our website (14.4.17).

Look out for: Magpies

With their distinctive black and white plumage, long trailing tail and loud chattering call, you hardly need to look out for them at all.

Like other successful creatures sharing Edinburgh, Magpies are not always popular. This is nothing new – they were almost completely absent in the 1960s due to persecution and lack of suitable habitat. As they returned, fears for populations of songbirds were raised, but the good news is that, despite their return in force, songbird numbers remain stable. Research identifies predation by cats as a far greater problem.

Even before such concerns, much negative superstition surrounded Magpies, including accusations of stealing shiny objects. These have also been questioned recently.

What we *do* know is they are skilled builders, creating dense twig nests with a roof, probably for protection against larger crows and birds of prey. Squirrels often adopt these as winter drays — *Miles Forde*



Image: Wikipedia, Creative Commons.

Not forgotten

Last month, minds turned again to Private Henry Hinds, the 20-year-old local killed in action on 10 April 1917, and buried in Warlincourt British Cemetery, Saulty in France.

His parents planted a rowan tree in his memory outside the family home at the west end of Barony Street near Broughton Market. Discovering the story many years later, members of the Broughton History Society replanted a tree there beside a commemorative plaque.

In March 2005 it was dedicated in the presence of local residents, Society members, Hind's living relations, and a representative of the young soldier's former regiment the Royal Scots. See the Broughton History *Newsletter*, pp. 2–3 at [goo.gl/Qb54cX].



Bin brouhaha bubbling nicely

Possible replacement of gull-proof bags with communal bins continues to concern parts of the New Town. Rumlings have been heard at the New Town & Broughton Community Council and at the splendidly titled Waste & Cleansing Consultative Forum (where a few waste-minded members of the public converse with officials).

Residents – mainly those in east–west aligned palace-fronted streets – are adamant that they secured an agreement *not* to have communal bins four years ago (see our website 29.4.13; 31.7.13). They fear a new generation of waste-management staff has either forgotten that deal, or are determined to overturn it.

CEC officials tell *Spurtle* there is no hidden agenda to impose a new solution, and no timetable either. However, the variable weight and unknown content of gull-proof bags (GPBs) represent a hazard to their staff, and bin tourism by some GPB users results in overflowing communal bins nearby. CEC is therefore considering alternatives prior to 'engaging' locals in a search for 'practical and sustainable solutions'. CEC staff make no promises about bespoke street-by-street arrangements. *Spurtle* suspects the eventual solution will indeed be large, boxy, wheeled and ideal for sharing with friends and neighbours.

We don't think communal bins are as bad as those who've never had them fear. But if the existing ones could be kept cleaner, emptied more often and reliably, with any 'side waste' removed promptly, then their introduction across remaining areas of the World Heritage Site would provoke far less hostility.



Moreover ...



On 18 April, Edinburgh World Heritage and Built Environment Forum Scotland staged an inaugural 'Heritage Hustings'. There was **general consensus** on the importance of: Edinburgh's **UNESCO status**, Planning reform by Holyrood (particularly over rights to appeal), short-let regulation, and maintaining a **dense population** of permanent residents in the city centre. See our website (19.4.17). Elsewhere, LCCC and NTBCC have responded to a Scottish Government consultation, calling for wide-ranging reforms and safeguards. See our website (19.4.17) for summaries.

This year's Christian Aid Book Sale starts on **Saturday 13 May** at St Andrew's and St George's West Church in **George Street**. Antiques, collectibles, pictures, records, postcards and stamps also feature in the sale, with money raised mainly focused on relieving the unimaginable hardship of countless **refugees and displaced people**. Christian Aid provides emergency supplies in the worst-hit areas, saving lives and supporting stricken people in the long term. The sale starts on 13 May and resumes from 15-19 May with late-night opening on 18 May. In 2016, the event realised **£141,000**, the highest total in its 43-year history. The patron for 2017 is **Sir Timothy O'Shea**, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh. Contact [info@stagw.org.uk].



The irritating modern practice of **plighting one's troth** by attaching padlocks to public places has reached Edinburgh. First seen on Calton Hill, it has now spread to the **Greenside giraffes**. *Spurtle* deplores such unsightly alternatives to the traditional unsightly snog and a promise.

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Come along and make a difference on **8 May** and **12 June at 7.30pm**
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www.ntbcc.org.uk

INDEPENDENT non-party political candidate



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A forum for local people who want to engage with and work for their local community.

Participate in local democracy.

Make representations to **City of Edinburgh Council**, other public bodies and private agencies on everything that matters locally.

Next meetings on **22 May** and **26 June**, 7.00pm McDonald Rd Library, and **ALL WELCOME**.

leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates



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Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

Every Monday:
 5-6pm at
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Every Friday:
 4-5pm at
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