

Spurtle



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No 270

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

PICARDY PLACE GYRATORY GOES AHEAD



A revised version of the Council's Picardy Place proposals was adopted by the Transport & Environment Committee on 25 January (see our website 25.1.18). As we went to press, the additional £1.5m costs were expected to be rubber-stamped by the Full Council on 1 February.

The fundamentals of tram stop, bus interchange and optimum motor-traffic circulation around a gyratory remained unchanged. Compared to earlier versions, there was more public space outside the Cathedral and Omni Centre, improved cycleways, and a reduced central island where little future development is envisaged. We are promised landscaping and 'greening' measures to mitigate noise and fumes for those seeking tranquillity on the new public realm. There remain vague aspirations to reduce traffic lanes later. CEC officers have firmly committed to ongoing discussion with stakeholders about further refinements.

Spurtle summarised the proposals here [goo.gl/EhoYCX], and reproduced a representative sample of online responses. We also covered objections and counter-proposals from the Picardy Place Joint Campaign, Leith Central CC, New Town & Broughton CC, Living Streets, and Spokes here [goo.gl/hNpRn5].

Cycling campaigners Spokes pragmatically accepted the report as a political done-deal, but urged supporters to push for further concessions. Among these were closing Leith Street (between Calton Road and Waterloo Place) to uphill traffic except buses, taxis and emergency services; reducing Leith Street to one lane in each direction, thus allowing a new cycleway and wider footway; improving connections to Broughton Street; replacing central tram platform with one either side and keeping tram tracks closer together; making a new cycle crossing between the island and Union Place [goo.gl/v95SnP]. We await news on these.

Regrettably, from the outset, there has been a whiff of cigar smoke and sulphur about the Picardy Place project. Its conceptual framing, design, consultation and implementation have never adequately engaged Edinburgh citizens in a timely manner. Consequently, there is now widespread suspicion about a scheme seemingly hatched behind closed doors out of commercial and political expediency, then irreversibly enshrined in the opaque GAM contract between Council, Scottish Government and developers.

Genuine efforts by Councillors Booth, Macinnes and Doran (and officials) to bring some clear accountability to the process came too late and could offer too little. Public confidence in how such major projects are handled here has again been badly dented.

BOOK-BROWSING BRUIN



Spurtle took a shine to this bibliophile bear last month, part of an exhibition of Sarah Robley's hand-pulled limited-edition linocuts at McNaughtan's Bookshop & Gallery. Robley's works reimagine the playful, anthropomorphic marginalia of 13th and 14th-century decorated breviaries, psalters and books of hours. Her 'Out of the Margins' exhibition continues at 3A and 4A Haddington Place until 29 March.

GAELIC AT DRUMMOND A CUCKOO IN THE NEST?

Debate about the future of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in Edinburgh has grown since December, with some local parents concerned it could negatively affect English Medium Education (EME) at Drummond Community High School.

Pupils choosing GME are increasing fast, and within four years they will outgrow James Gillespie's High School. The question now is whether GME could and should move to Drummond (currently below capacity) alongside EME.

Drummond offers a central location and potential to share resources with Bunscoil Taobh na Pàirce on Bonnington Road. But its own growing popularity coupled with GME expansion may mean the combined school population soon becoming too big for the premises here as well.

If that happens, sceptics suspect the Council's long-term ambitions for a dedicated GME secondary school would lead to Drummond's EME students' forced transfer to Trinity and Leith Academies. They fear losing their local secondary school, its community ethos and expert nurturing of young people with additional support needs.

The debate is more nuanced than we have space to report here (start instead at [goo.gl/cKUXch]), with cross-party support for GME matched by internal anxieties about alienated voters, and mutually supportive GME/EME parents worried about divisive solutions.

Informal discussions between Council and parent groups are planned in February. The March meeting of the Children & Families Committee will probably fall too early for a decision on statutory consultation to be made.



Briefly



Thanks to reader David McDowell, who took this photo in **Tesco on Broughton Rd.** ‘Has Scotland’s national fizzy pop got hitherto unknown properties?’ he asks.

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will be on 5 Feb at 7.00pm in Drummond CHS. **Robert Jardine** will talk on “‘Modern Athens’ – Bo’ness Pottery and the Buildings of Edinburgh’. You sherd it here first.

Earthy Foods & Goods Ltd, late of this parish, was **placed into Administration** on 9 Jan. We have no further details at this stage. In other bad news, the branch of **Valvona & Crolla** on Multrees Walk has shut.

On 9 Jan the Development Management Subcommittee **refused planning permission** for a Parisian-pissoir-style **advertising drum** in St Andrew Sq (Ref. 17/05097/ADV). The proposal would have had an ‘unacceptable impact on the amenity of the location’, did not accord with other regulations, or **CEC guidance on advertisements, sponsorship and city dressing**. Some 28 comments were received (including one from the NTBCC), all of them objections.

Discussions about the future design of **George St and the First New Town (GNT)** were held for ‘stakeholders’ and the general public in Dec and Jan. Organised by the **Council and environmental consultants WYG and LDA Design**, the events were remarkably well organised and useful. *Spurtle* stressed that good design would be useless without **effective management of civic spaces** by CEC; management which does not sell off or rent out its estate piecemeal to commercial interests.

Repairs to listed railings and coping stones at **No 31 Broughton St** are now finished. In the 11 months since a **Tracey’s delivery lorry** partially demolished them, the basement area has frequently been visited by police dealing with **vagrants and drug users**. Deep cleaning has removed human excrement and **60–70 needles**. Exasperated householders seek to recover costs from the the Broxburn-based waste-management service.

If Presbytery processes ‘run smoothly’, on 6 Feb **Broughton St Mary’s congregation** can elect a Nominating Committee to choose a new minister.

Albany St-based charity the **Rock Trust** are offering free places at all levels in the **Edinburgh Marathon Festival** (26–27 May) to individuals joining their team. Junior runners should aim to raise £50 each, adults £250. More at goo.gl/4aUCw6.

RBS amendments not enough for locals

The deadline for comments on Royal Bank of Scotland’s latest planning permission in principle for Dundas Street/Fettes Row/Eyre Place (Ref. 16/05454/PPP) passed on 15 January.

RBS’s most recent proposals included:

- reduction of 4 blocks on Fettes Row from 8 storeys to 7; reduction of blocks on Royal Crescent from 8 storeys to 4 (but still over Historic Environment Scotland’s recommended height of 1.75 storeys above street level)
- reduction of parking spaces from 527 to 311
- a more symmetrical approach to layout of 4 blocks at the site’s south-eastern end
- reduction in total floorspace of 20 per cent.

The amendments don’t satisfy many locals, over 100 of whom attended the New Town & Broughton Community Council’s meeting on 8 January. They argue proposed building heights on Royal Crescent remain too high, and say local services could not cope with up to 400 new residential units. Eyre Place access is a bottleneck, they claim, and will encourage parking overspill nearby.

There is opposition to demolition of the existing RBS buildings occurring before they have either been repurposed or full planning permission has been granted to replace them.

This application outlines potential uses in order to maximise the site’s market value. Much work – for developers and locals – still lies ahead.



What next for key Broughton offices?



Image: Wikipedia, Creative Commons

In late January, two central-Broughton properties were under offer at a combined price of over £4.5 million. The 4-storey, 11,281 sq.ft Playfair House on Broughton Street Lane has a total annual rental value of £153,626. The Category B-listed Forth House on Forth Street (Radio Forth’s HQ) is bigger (12,572 sq.ft) and more valuable at £159,600 pa. Tenants’ leases run till 2022, with break options in 2020.

Whether tenants will stay is hard to tell, but selling agents have suggested redevelopment options including residential, serviced-apartment and student-housing alternatives to current office use. Some such options involve expanding an existing fire-escape connection between the properties.

Locals quiz ‘Kingsford Residence’ management

Last month, parents, carers and friends at Broughton Primary School met those who will run the newly converted Kingsford Residence at 154 McDonald Road when tenants move in (our website 10.1.18).

Parental concern here has always focused on ensuring children’s safety in the playground immediately adjacent to ‘unknown’ adults at home. Attendance by Cllrs Donaldson and Rae, Ben Macpherson MSP and members of both local community councils reflected the seriousness of the issue.

Kingsford Estates have appointed a three-person management team to the building, two of whom will always be active onsite on weekdays. They say children’s safety is their priority.

Although not legally allowed to vet tenants in advance, they will link leases to a strict code of conduct (including a no-communication clause). ‘Privacy coatings’ on windows will block views from/to sleeping areas. Kingsford say they respect children’s right to use the Open Playground until 9pm, and will not try to restrict noise or activity.

Kingsford wants a stable community of long-term tenants (paying £950–1,100 per month for a 1-bedroom furnished flat), although short-term lets are likely at the start. ‘Affordable’ rents for some flats will be thrashed out with Council officials soon.

January’s meeting largely succeeded in forging a cordial relationship between school community and Kingsford management. Furthermore, in compensation for No 154’s behind-schedule and disruptive conversion, the developer is negotiating a ‘wishlist’ of improvements around the school drawn up by the Headteacher.

Council draws line under armadillo trial

'Armadillo' bumps – piloted on Leith Walk late last year as 'soft segregation' between cars and bikes – were removed after 4 weeks because they proved trip hazards. They had cost £3,500 to supply and install (see our website 16.12.17).

Instead, the option now preferred by the Council and cycling campaign group Spokes is physically segregating 'splitter kerblines'. In the approaches to Pilrig Street these would comprise 3m x 0.45m raised islands (3 northbound, 4 southbound) with a 'reboundable' bollard in each. They would be divided by 3m gaps.

Spurgle understands they'll be paid for out of the tram budget, and – if approved – would set the style and standard for the whole length of Leith Walk.

The proof of the pudding, of course, will be in the driving of a white van over them ... or not. First impressions are that they offer a better psychological and physical barrier to motor vehicles than either armadillos or the imaginary powers of magic paint.

If Edinburgh is serious about prioritising cyclists and pedestrians, it must move towards spending serious money on credible infrastructure and traffic-law enforcement. Splitter kerblines are not the complete solution, but they look like a step in the right direction.

Look out for: Siskins

This is a difficult time for birds. Not only is the weather at its hardest, but many species, especially Tits, are starting to look for nest sites and staking out a territory for the spring. Listen for the welcome return of their see-saw calls on calmer days.

Many birds flock at this time of year and large groups of smaller ones move through Edinburgh's wooded areas. For many, these are the ideal refuge from worse weather to the North. Look carefully and you may spot a diminutive but charming visitor: the Siskin. In winter, Siskins forage together, feeding on the small cones of alder, birch and cypress. They breed in pine forests and will depart Edinburgh soon, triggered by increasing daylight.

How to see them: Siskins visit bird-feeders and males can be identified by their dark cap, streaked back and bright yellow plumage around the face, bib and wing stripe. They are much more delicate than the larger resident Greenfinch. In flight they have a distinct forked tail which, along with their small size and 'bounding' flight-pattern identify them as they pass overhead. — *Miles Forde*



Image: Slawek Staszczuk (photoss [AT] hotmail.co.uk)

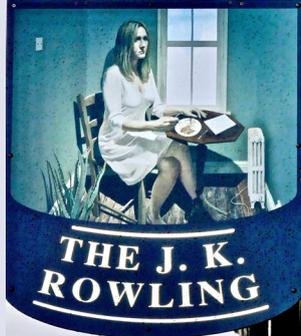
Bar name change explained

As part of the 'Message from the Skies' Festival staged across Edinburgh in January, the Conan Doyle bar on York Place was temporarily rebranded the J.K. Rowling.

The pop-up pub-sign depicted a glum Ms Rowling, apparently suffering writer's block and trapped in a boxroom as her boiled eggs and toast fingers slid off the table.

The festival entailed a 12-part short story by Val McDermid projected onto a dozen city locations to celebrate the capital and 'resurrect the reputation of generations of women writers who have too often been forgotten, in the litany of Edinburgh's famous male literary stars'.

Great idea. But Rowling ... forgotten? Not yet, surely?



New light on Stevenson

An Historic Environment Scotland plaque commemorating distinguished lighthouse engineer Robert Stevenson (1772–1850) has been attached to his former office/home at 1–3 Baxter's Place (now the Courtyard-Marriott hotel). It was recently unveiled by his great, great, great grandson James Will.

Stevenson built 20+ lighthouses during his career, but found time for other projects such as Edinburgh's Regent Bridge, sea walls, harbours, canals, river navigation, intermittent and flashing lights, and the fathering of eight children [goo.gl/GERpuZ].

Three of these infants died in 1808. This was the year Stevenson moved into Baxter's Place, while he was also largely absent from home during construction of the lighthouse at Bell Rock. His wife was Jean Smith. Any chance of a plaque for her, too?

Cooks and good company

A new Community Cook Club is meeting in the Botanic Gardens every second Friday between 10.30am and 1pm. Organised by the Cyrenians, it gives beginners a chance to learn how to cook, and others an opportunity to simply enjoy the company.

Participants usually prepare a two-course meal (with vegetarian option) and enough for an extra portion to take away. The aims are to reduce social isolation and loneliness, and provide dignified access to food for those experiencing food poverty. It's also great fun.

Cook Clubs are free and you don't have to sign up – just arrive at the Botanic Cottage by 10.30am. The next events are on 9 and 23 February. For more on the Cyrenians, see [goo.gl/UUuf7G].



Briefly



We like this street art, spotted last month in **Hillside Crescent Gardens**. Viewed through half-closed eyes, **it resolves into a face**. We're less sure about the newly arrived **Paolozzis**, the ankle of which seems to be sinking into a shaking bog. Come spring, no doubt, **they will look grand**. But grand in the wrong place for the wrong reasons.

A **Valentine's event with a difference** for gay, bi and trans men (including non-binary people) will be held from 6–9pm on 15 Feb at 9 Howe St. You don't have to be in a relationship to attend and there'll be no mention of hearts or roses. Instead: 'Coffee, games and a classic queer horror film'. **Booking essential**: Tel. 523 1100 or email [stephen@lgbthealth.org.uk]. For **other LGBT** events between now and the end of Mar, see [goo.gl/Nk6hmg].

Forthcoming **AHSS lectures at St Andrew's & St George's W Church** on George St include Elizabeth Darling on '**Heroines of the Cowgate**' (5 Feb) and Louisa Humm on '**William Adam and Formal Landscape Design in Scotland, 1720–45**' (12 Mar). Details: [goo.gl/2B8stA].

Forth St-based **Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council** was recognised as **Third Sector Organisation of the Year** at the Scottish Diversity Awards in Dec. The award recognised ELREC's outstanding contribution in spreading '**diversity, equality and empowerment**'.

Neatly linking two stories featured in this issue, @cocteautriplets last month bemoaned the number of CEC-owned school premises **sold off for luxury flats** that might otherwise have been used to house a dedicated **Gaelic Medium Education** secondary school. They include: 154 McDonald Rd; Leith Academy; Canongate; Marchmont Rd; Borroughmuir; St Bernard's Primary; Dr Bell's; Canonmills; and Lochend. For the **nicely sardonic** thread, visit [goo.gl/LGZEZV].

In May 2017, a Reporter ordered the **dwelling/AirBnB on E. Scotland St Lane** be restored to authorised use as a garage (Issue 263). Since then, to nobody's great surprise, nothing has happened. Locals say CEC Enforcement will now organise the work and charge the proprietor for it (Ref. 17/00220/ECOU). We see no evidence of it.

Moreover ...



Our thanks go to the **Drummond Civic Association** committee member who, while out **enjoying the snow** with her family on the evening of 17 Jan, took this atmospheric photo of the **Drummond Place Garden west gate**

City of Edinburgh Council and the Ross Development Trust are downplaying **talk of a rift** over the Ross Bandstand. RDT suspended fundraising in Dec, saying CEC had not met potential donors' demands for **guarantees about future maintenance**. CEC told us it was 'working together with the Trust to develop a business plan to **provide clarity** on the future operating model This should provide the **strongest possible basis** for future fundraising'. RDT's MD David Ellis told us 'W Princes Street Gardens **belongs to the people of Edinburgh**, and I would stress that the Trust **has not, and will not ever, attempt to change that**'. He declined to answer any follow-up questions.

Lidl seeks permission for a new, 3m x 1m, vinyl, non-illuminated sign on the wall of **1 Logie Green Rd** for the next 5 years. It would comprise the Lidl logo, a large arrow pointing from right to left, and the word 'Parking'. Back in 2013, developer's agent Jones Lang LaSalle assured NTBCC and others that the supermarket would be a 'chimney-pot' store focused on local customers with little need for cars. Some back then predicted Lidl would quickly refocus on drivers from further afield [goo.gl/ozBU3t].

Planning permission is sought for a new structure to replace the **old but awkward Canon Mill** on Eyre Pl (Ref. 17/05967/FUL). Developers want to remove the roof, adjust windows in the façade, and **demolish the building behind**. In its place, they hope to build 11 flats and commercial space at ground-floor level. A '**glazed box**' would top what remained of the façade, helping to create an unusual new roofline. See [goo.gl/T9BAB].

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LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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 meeting: 7pm, 19 February 2018
 Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates

Deidre Brock MP
 Edinburgh North and Leith



Regular Surgeries

Leith: 1st Friday of the month
 1–2pm, 166 Great Junction Street
Leith Walk: 2nd Friday of the month
 3.30–4.30pm, McDonald Rd Library
Stockbridge: 3rd Friday of the month
 1–2pm Stockbridge Library
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre: Last Friday, 4–5pm
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 for Edinburgh Northern
 and Leith Constituency



Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

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 28-30 Ferry Road
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Every Friday:
 4-5pm at
 Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre
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You're very welcome to attend.

Come along and make a
 difference at our next meeting
7.30pm, 12 February
 Broughton St Mary's Parish
 Church, Bellevue Crescent

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