

Spurtle



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May
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No 273

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

TRAM PLANNERS ANSWER QUESTIONS

Council 'Tram Team' members planning the route from Broughton to Newhaven (in the event of an extension being approved) answered questions from Leith Central Community Council last month.

We summarised 13 responses relating to the London Road-Pilrig Street section on our website (17.4.18). Interesting or concerning points included:

- During construction, north-bound buses on Leith Walk would be diverted via Easter Road. Southbound buses would be diverted via Bonnington Road and Broughton Street.
- Elm Row trees would be cut down and replaced like for like in new positions.
- Trams would terminate at St Andrew Square for 9 months during construction.
- Tram planners acknowledge public concern at the lack of pedestrian crossings. They will address this.

LCCC's detailed minutes of this meeting will appear on their website in due course, but the Tram Team's transcription is available for download from the foot of the page here: [bit.ly/2HYFo6Q].

NEW BATTLE FOR CLUTTER-FREE CENTRE

British Telecommunications PLC seeks planning permission to remove 26 payphones from central Edinburgh and replace them with 12 InLink units.

InLinks offer free superfast Wi-Fi, mobile and landline calls, mobile-device charging, and access to maps, directories and local services.

InLinks pay for themselves (and their upkeep) via their integral, double-sided, illuminated, digital-advertising panels. Potentially, there could be 24 of these across Castle, Frederick, George, Hanover, Queen, South St Andrew, and South Charlotte Streets, Baxter's and Picardy Places.

The proposed installations are really well designed and clever bits of kit, but their digital displays would, *Spurtle* suspects, visually intrude to the detriment of George Street and the First New Town just as Edinburgh looks for ways to beautify and improve them.

We think the reasons for opposing the new advertising in this specific historic area are the same as those cited by the Council in rejecting JCDcaux's high-tech bus shelters in 2016. We detailed the pros and cons on our website last month (26.4.18), and listed material grounds for objection. The deadline for all comments is 18 May.

LEGAL FIRM SUFFERS SIGNAGE SET-BACK

Locals have welcomed the decision by City of Edinburgh Council to refuse a retrospective planning application by McEwan Fraser (18/00354/ADV).

The legal giant had sought to retain illuminated advertisements, flagpoles and signage outside its HQ at 130 East Claremont Street. Neighbouring residents claimed the unconsented additions are visually intrusive and dangerously distracting to drivers on a busy junction near Broughton Primary School (Issue 264 & our website 27.2.18).

The Development Management Subcommittee agreed with objectors. Councillors found that the additions have an adverse effect on neighbouring amenity and are detrimental to public safety.

If McEwan Fraser appeals this decision, the Scottish Government will consider the case alongside another appeal by the firm against CEC's earlier Enforcement notice (Ref. ADE-230-2011).

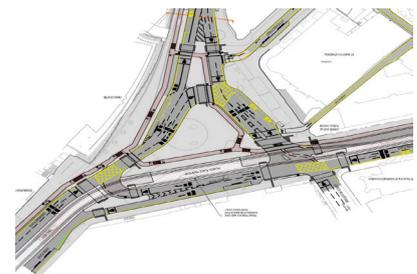


EYE-POPPING POPPIES



Floodgates on Warriston Road were brightened up last month by the eye-catching and meticulously executed painting of carved 'poppy boards'. The painstaking work was carried out by staff at the nearby Lady Haig's Poppy Factory, who have 'taken ownership' of the artwork (and its upkeep) as a community contribution. 'We are absolutely delighted with the result,' says factory manager Major (Rtd) Charlie Pelling. 'The gates look vibrant, enormously colourful and ... I believe they will become very popular with residents and visitors alike'. The factory employs 41 disabled ex-servicemen who assemble over 5 million poppies every year: an astonishing 121,952 each.

PICARDY PLACE PLANS CONFIRMED



Final plans for the new Picardy Place layout were published last month (our website 18.4.18).

Various tweaks have been made to the previous version, but the essential features of the gyratory remain in place. The latest adjustments (some stemming from constructive talks with resident, cycling and pedestrian groups) include:

- reduced traffic lanes
- more public-realm space around St Mary's Cathedral
- confirmed bus-stop and servicing provision
- improved traffic signalling
- simplification of crossings for pedestrians and cyclists
- cycle priority measures at junctions.

Spurtle is still assessing the spoonfuls of sugar in relation to the bitter pills to swallow. Construction will start this month and continue until the end of the year. For a high-quality zoomable pdf on the Council's website, visit: [bit.ly/2HtOd7y].

Briefly

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will be on 14 May at 7pm in Drummond CHS. **Malcolm Chisholm**, former MSP for Edinburgh Northern and Leith, will talk about **'The Scottish Parliament since 1999'**. Wholly rude remarks are unlikely.

Glass & Thomson, the quintessential New Town café at **2 Dundas St**, seeks planning consent to extend opening hours from 6.30pm to midnight (Ref. 18/01149). Any additional **noise and smell** generated by evening customers will **not be noticeable** to neighbours, says the application.

An offer on the former **Church of Scotland manse on E. Claremont St** has been accepted, and 2 offers have been received for the former manse on **Ravelston Ter**. Once both are sold, the proceeds will be spent on a new manse, and then **Broughton St Mary's** can advertise for a new minister.

In late March, the **Powderhall Arms** on Broughton Rd transformed into the **Dunedin Bar**. A crisp modern refurb, craft beer and artisan gin are the new order. Live music continues. The allegedly **'rough-arsed'** clientele of old have either moved on (where's left in Broughton?) or are unrecognisable beneath **state-of-the-art false hipster-beards**. Neb at your leisure: [goo.gl/h33WL3].



Congratulations to **Broughton-based** community activist **Foysol Choudhury** MBE, recently listed on the **British Bangladeshi Power & Inspiration 2018 Top 100**.

The **Howard Hotel** on Great King St had, before it went defunct, planning permission for a mews-scale development at **16 SE Cumberland St Lane**. New applicants, the Fluckers, now 'aspire to realise' a **4-bedroom 'contemporary house**, of the highest possible quality' on the same site; something that 'produces a **well designed family home "of its time"** in an established residential area and provides a **positive contemporary addition** to the immediate surroundings' (Ref. 18/1091/FUL).

When the Council consults this month on updating its **Licensing policies** for the next 3 years, NTBCC will press for the **First New Town** to be designated as an area of **overprovision**. Problematically, no clear definition of 'overprovision' currently exists.

Ritchie in the news again

Cllr Lewis Ritchie made the news again last month as he tries to build a new career as an Independent in Ward 12.

First, he received a frosty email from Leith Central Community Council, whose Chair Charlotte Encombe criticised the Leith Walk ward councillor's record of attendance. Ritchie responded with a statement to the *Spurtle* (our website 16.4.18).

He defended his overall attendance record, while attributing non-appearances in part to an enforced leave of absence starting in October 2017, and in part to a wish to let the dust settle following recent controversy and his resignation from the SNP (Issues 269-72).

Ritchie undertook to attend future LCCC meetings, even though under no obligation to do so. He has said elsewhere that community councils are not the only way for councillors to engage with constituents and gather opinion.

Applying brakes to tram extension

Later in the month, Ritchie launched a Leithers Against the Tram campaign in advance of a final decision being made this autumn. He is currently arranging to consult businesses, Lothian Buses, and active travel groups.

Ritchie told *Spurtle* he is not opposed to *all* trams, but has severe reservations about 'this particular project, at this particular time, being run in this particular way'.

His doubts focus on: the foolishness of proceeding before Lord Hardie's enquiry has reported; a 'flimsy' business case; insufficient details about not enough financial compensation for disrupted businesses; and an 'unrealistic' timescale for completion of the work. He says the pre-election deadline of April 2022 is 'blatantly political'.

Counter-critics accuse Ritchie's campaign of transparent opportunism, and some who voted for him as an SNP candidate now want him to resign.

Officials not open to Tunnel vision

Has anyone got an idea for how to use this screen? That's the question posed by Friends of King George V and Scotland Yard Parks in their spring *Newsletter*.

Friends had hoped to involve local schoolchildren in attaching a design to brighten up the area. They had backing from teachers, designers, an architect and local councillor, but CEC's Bridges and Structures team could not support the idea.

They feared the project would attract vandals, causing expensive damage to the screen or the surrounding brickwork, 'possibly involving forced entry to the tunnel'. Fair enough, we live at a time of restricted budgets, but with that level of pessimism about, there seems no hope of anything Council-owned ever being improved anywhere.

So what alternatives are feasible? Perhaps a removable cinema screen for film nights under the stars? Or a temporary platform for performances? Send us your ideas and we'll forward them.



That's another fine mess ...



Spurtle has long extolled the attractions of Broughton, and as keenly bemoaned its occasional gardy-loo or fur-coat-and-nae-knickers aberrations.

To varying degrees, the ghastly mess pictured here has littered the area outside 52a London Street and the property adjacent. The former tattoo parlour premises are currently to let, but even so this neglect is absolutely unacceptable.

I have seen the Future and it bleeps



Many people these days decry the seemingly inevitable rise and triumph of the robot. However, if *this* vision of the future, on E. Scotland Street Lane, is accurate, we have little to worry about.

Splash of colour

The newly refurbished Ross Fountain, which began to take shape again in West Princes Street Gardens last month, has been raising eyebrows. The combination of brown and bright blue-green matches the original colour scheme, but is not to everybody's taste today.

The Fountain is no stranger to controversy. On first erection in Edinburgh (1871), Dean Ramsay described the assorted boobs, bums and fishtails as 'grossly indecent and disgusting, insulting and offensive to the moral feelings of the community and disgraceful to the city'.



Look out for: Song Thrushes

This is our 'common' resident thrush, although not as ubiquitous as it once was. The Song Thrush has recently been added to the RSPB's red list due to a steep decline in their numbers. Worse still, the decline charted by the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch shows this decline to be specifically in Scotland!

Thrushes are shy birds and often forage under cover. They are easy to identify despite their olive-coloured back, a distinct speckled chest being one of their most recognisable features. Up close, the spots can be seen to be arrow-shaped. The observant viewer may also notice an orange colour under the wing as they fly.

Known in Scotland as the Mavis, they are one of our finest singers, repeating favoured phrases three or four times before moving on to a different refrain. Thrushes have their own favoured phrases, and this preference varies across the country, effectively creating regional dialects.

Thrushes, like their cousins the Blackbirds, shift about in winter; but as 'our' birds move south they are replaced by other more northerly birds, presumably asking in a foreign accent what all the fuss is about. By May, however, we have our resident birds back and they will be nesting, usually low down in thick bushes and ivy. Their nests are beautifully lined with soft material or mud, and usually contain 4 to 6 turquoise eggs. Chicks are born naked and helpless, but leave the nest within 4 weeks. They are often found on the ground but this is normal— if you find them, leave them. The parents will return when you are gone.

Thrushes have a particular skill in feeding on snails. They have learned to break open the shells on a stone, these anvils soon becoming littered with the remains.
— Miles Forde



Image: Taco Meewsen, Wikimedia [bit.ly/2HYUCL].

Briefly



The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's *Amorphophallus titanum* is in rude good health, and surprising botanists. RBGE experts report that 'Amazingly, the same corm that produced the flowers in 2015 and 2017 and now has the fruit spike also has a new huge leaf growing at the same time. We don't know of this simultaneous fruit and leaf growth from one corm happening anywhere before. The growth of a new leaf shows that the corm has survived the process of producing fruit, and should go on to produce yet another flower in the future.'

Since the sun went down on **Aurora Books**, after 12 years, in August 2015 (Issue 244), **No. 6 Tanfield** has lain empty. Soon, however, it is to gurgle cheerfully as a new 'specialist off-licence and tasting room'. The **Original Bier Company** focuses on special, high-quality German beers and spirits, including Windspiel Gin, for which it is the **official UK importer**. See: [www.originalbier.com].

Two acts of vandalism came to our attention last month. The **St John in the City defibrillator** attached to railings outside **McDonald Rd Library** was damaged on 10 Apr. On the same day, at **Drummond CHS**, vandalism of a second defibrillator prompted temporary closure of the Community Playground, and possibly longer-term changes to opening hours.

As first reported by us in May last year [bit.ly/2GyAD6p], the Ingleby Gallery is moving into the **Glasite Meeting House on Barony St**. The new venue will open on 12 May, marking its 20th anniversary with an exhibition of work by **Callum Innes**. Opening hours will be 11am–5pm, Wed–Sat. **Listed building consent** for the gallery's changes to the building's interior was **initially refused** because proposed removal of the pulpit and box pews did not comply with the **development plan and non-statutory guidance**, and would be of 'considerable detriment' to the A-listed structure's **special interest and historic character**. The Glasite's owner, the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, appealed to the Scottish Government in September last year, and a Reporter **found in their favour** in Jan. On balance, we welcome the old building's new lease of life.

Words on birds

On 7 April, writes *JRM*, Edinburgh's first makar (or poet laureate) Stewart Conn delivered a memorable reading of his poetry on the theme of 'Edinburgh: City in a Landscape.'

Organised by the Royal Overseas League, it was held in the Royal Scots Club on Abercromby Place and attracted a virtual sell-out audience. It was an exhilarating and convivial occasion, and included one reading prompted by April's *Spurtle* feature on pheasants.

To welcome in May, we invited Mr Conn to contribute a poem for this month's issue. Here it is.

CHARLOTTE SQUARE

Facing due east is the symmetrical facade of St. George's church. Adam's design discarded, yet harmonious, its coffered dome imposing on Edinburgh's skyline,

it stands aloof from the traffic encircling the Square, the din and fumes where bedecked fillies once clopped. I jump back as a souped-up motor-cycle zooms

too close for comfort. In the garden are thousands of blue and yellow crocuses where Lord Cockburn stood to listen to the corncrakes in the dewy grass.

Stewart Conn

Masterplan for Waverley

Network Rail and City of Edinburgh Council will start work this summer on a Waverley Masterplan to cope with more people using Edinburgh's main station.

Transport Scotland, VisitScotland, Scottish Enterprise, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and neighbouring property owners will also be involved.

Annual footfall at Waverley has risen from 10m to 24m since 2008, and is expected to reach 40m by 2024.

Some people, like the Old Town Community Council, regard this influx with alarm. Others, like Spokes, at least see a welcome opportunity to reintroduce the pedestrian roof-bridge over Waverley from Calton Road to Jeffrey Street.

Moreover ...

Design Excellence Scotland will showcase the work of over 20 designers creating 'exceptional objects for the everyday'. The event will be free to the public from 11am to 6pm, 12-15 May at **Lyon & Turnbull, Broughton Pl.** Free ticketed debate (via Eventbrite) on 14 May, 5-7.30pm.

This year's **Christian Aid Book Sale** will start in St Andrew's & St George's West Church (**George St**) on 12 May, resuming on 14 May till 18 May. The artist and writer **John Byrne** will be the 2018 Patron.

If you're wondering what's happening about the case of the garage-cum-short-term-rental on **E. Scotland St Lane**, we understand it is now in the hands of the Council's legal department.

One Ting after another. The **Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh** is to erect a traditional Chinese monument at the foot of its **Chinese Hillside**. The edifice, measuring over 4.5m high and 2.5m x 2.5m at the base, will accompany a **large, new stone Ting** (meaning pavilion, and properly pronounced ting) to replace the smaller, dismantled, 22-year-old wooden one. Both structures have been 'gifted by the Chinese Government and local Chinese community'. RGBE's on-site sign avoids getting bogged down in detail **three times**: 'We hope to have the area reopened to visitors as quickly as possible once building works are completed.' **Sir Humphrey Appleby** would be proud. For a sneak preview, visit [bit.ly/zGZ8jti].

An application to reduce the height of **4 lime trees** by 30% has been rejected by the Council (Ref. 18/01263/TC0). Instead, CEC made a **Tree Preservation Order** on the specimens, situated behind **Bellevue Cres.** CEC encouraged the applicant to **try again** with a submission 'more in keeping with sympathetic arboricultural management'.

Beware of counterfeit **Royal Bank of Scotland £20 notes**, currently circulating in Edinburgh. They're of unusually good quality but lack the **metal foil strip**.

Anecdotal evidence suggests **inhabited dormobiles** parked semi-permanently on residential streets are a growing issue in the city centre, and not just those **used by visitors** during the summer months. Police say that, so long as they're **not causing an obstruction** or breaking parking rules, there's nothing illegal about it. Some locals object because **dormofolk** occupy space and use services without paying Council Tax.

Spartle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, M. Forde, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, S. Michael, M. Orr, L. Rogers, C. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.

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Appointments not necessary,
18 Rodney Street, Tel. 557 2393



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, 15 May 2018
Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates



Leith Central Community Council

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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Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament
for Edinburgh Northern
and Leith Constituency



Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

Every Monday:
5-6pm at
Leith Library
28-30 Ferry Road
Edinburgh
EH6 4AE

Every Friday:
4-5pm at
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre
Pilton Drive North
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**NEW TOWN &
BROUGHTON
COMMUNITY COUNCIL**
represents the views
of local residents to
City of Edinburgh Council.

You're very welcome to attend.

Come along and make a
difference at our next meeting
7.30pm, 14 May
Broughton St Mary's Parish
Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbcc.org.uk