

# Spurtle



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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER**

**Free**

## REVISED TRAMWAY PLANS DISCUSSED

'Key stakeholders' were invited to meet CEC officials and tram engineers at a series of Community Tram Workshops last month.

They included community councillors, ward councillors, Spokes and Living Streets representatives, and senior staff from Edinburgh Trams. Under discussion were the Elm Row layout, and the route from Pilrig Street to the Foot of the Walk.



Some present felt it was a carefully controlled presentation of limited revised options, but significant and welcome modifications emerged nonetheless. On Leith Walk north of Pilrig Street:

- 1 lane of traffic in each direction to be shared by trams and other motor vehicles
- a 1.8m central refuge which would not deter informal pedestrian transit between widely spaced formal crossings
- 1 cycle lane in each direction on either side of the road, passing behind 'floating bus stops' and loading bays as necessary
- repositioning southwards of the Balfour Street tram stop (to improve access into the latter for residents)
- better use of side streets for parking and loading.

Some stakeholders warmly welcomed the workshops. Others were uncertain about how many alternatives had truly been thought through and why they were rejected. There were a few criticisms that plans on display again contained unnecessary errors and omissions.

There were also misgivings about who had been invited in what combinations to which events, and whether the consequent slicing and dicing of stakeholders was Machiavellian, pragmatic or coincidental.

## TOGETHER ON TRAMS

The four community councils through which a future tramway to Newhaven may run have joined forces to coordinate their responses.

Community Councils Together on Trams (CCTT) launched last month, with input from New Town & Broughton, Leith Central, Leith Links, and Leith/Harbour & Newhaven CCs.

They agree on the need for:

- improved consultation by City of Edinburgh Council, including a timetable allowing meaningful discussion
- a design prioritising people over vehicles
- a report on the economic impact of tramworks on local businesses
- effective measures to mitigate disruption.

The initiative is intended as a positive and constructive move. But some see it as a shot across CEC's bows, a robust reaction to poor consultation on the Picardy Place gyratory and slow implementation of Leith Walk improvements. Locals from York Place to Ocean Terminal now want meaningful engagement in tram proposals, not lip-service or manipulative, choreographed and rushed processes masquerading as accountability.

## FREE SPIRIT CAUGHT ON FILM



This Scotland Street local worthy and free spirit is Graham Croan Bee, pictured here with his friend Juliet Henderson. Graham is the subject of a notable recent film, *The King and I* (2017), directed by Daniel Cook. It presents a fly-on-the-wall view of Graham's colourful life and home, in conversation with Juliet. The film has garnered several national and international awards and much critical praise. A full article on the redoubtable Mr Bee and this remarkable documentary will appear on our website soon.

## ALL HAIL, ESSENTIAL EDINBURGH!

Essential Edinburgh has been returned for another 5-year term to manage the city centre's Business Improvement District.

Some 70% of eligible businesses took part in the vote, and 91% of them supported EE. There was no other name on the ballot. Residents were not entitled to vote.

EE described the figures on its website as 'overwhelming' and 'whopping', but they are no match for the Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland in North Korea, which, in 2014, secured 100% of the seats on a turnout of 99.7%.

The 550 levy-paying businesses in EE's patch will now continue jointly to contribute £1m per year for 'quality services and initiatives' in addition to those provided by the Council.

Chief Executive Roddy Smith, speaking shortly before the Film Festival arrived in St Andrew Square Garden to flatten the grass and further compact the subsoil, said the money would be 'spent wisely, innovatively and on exciting projects and services that make the city centre the best in Britain'.

## Drummond onward and up

There was an enthusiastic response to Drummond Community High School's Celebration of Achievement on 12 June [bit.ly/2I46Led]. The Drummond Community group reflected a week later: 'It was lovely to see Jodie Hannan, the Headteacher, going out into the playground this morning to welcome all the P7s visiting today. While it has been a hard six months for the Drummond Community, it has resulted in a stronger, more engaged school community both at Drummond and at the feeder primary schools.' Reader Linda Somerville summed it up neatly in a Tweet full of ticks.



Linda Somerville @lindasomervill · 3h

Improved reputation and profile @Drummond\_CHS ✓ Increased community and parental support @DCHSparents ✓ Busted myths ✓ Expanded S1 role ✓ Job done @DrummondCommuni ✓ #LoveDrummond

# Briefly



**Glass & Thompson**, the Dundas St café institution beloved of Alexander McCall Smith and the New Town Flâneur among others, is **undergoing a transformation**. Last month it was closed for **refurbishment**, and recruiting on Facebook for ‘awesome people to join us on our exciting new journey’ as a bistro. Stand by for L’escapade.

Leith St, closed to through traffic since 5am on 2 Sept as part of the St James Quarter project, will reopen at 4pm on 31 July. Calton Road will reopen at 8pm on the same day. Landscaping and lane layout work at Picardy Place is scheduled to be finished on 21 July.

A **Council report** of 2014 (Para. 3.24) shows again how developers can’t bear **green space without cash tills**: ‘A coffee kiosk is also proposed within Registers Gardens similar to the kiosk located within St Andrew Square which would have an excellent opportunity to draw on footfall.’ (See p.2 for context.)



**Edinburgh Academy** has taken its controversial plans for redevelopment (Issue 272; our website 7.3.18) to the **Department for Planning and Environmental Appeals** after CEC Planners failed to reach a determination by the **statutory deadline**. One can’t blame the Academy for that, but *really* ... so much for local planning democracy.

**Storm Hector** damaged trees and delighted roofing contractors across Edinburgh on 14 June. **Broughton** escaped quite lightly, although one of the few remaining trees in **Greenside Place** was toppled.



Do you have a **problem neighbour** who keeps complaining that your **magnificent high hedge** is interfering with their reasonable enjoyment of domestic property? Find out **what they may be planning** to do next: [bit.ly/2MnHVtf].

## Five plates spinning on Broughton Road

City of Edinburgh Council is sounding the waters about the future of sites around the former Powderhall Waste Transfer Station at 165 Broughton Road.

In March, we covered its outline ideas for converting the B-listed stable-block into much-needed artist studios, micro-enterprise offices and community spaces [bit.ly/2MDILSH]. These may eventually be joined by a 450-home development to the rear.

CEC officials presented these still vague stable-block proposals to Leith Central Community Council last month. LCCC members were awkward and sceptical, useful attributes when a cash-strapped local authority moots disposing of assets. They wanted to talk also about the wider development, and about plans for the former bowling greens on the other side of St Mark’s Path.

CEC consulted separately about the greens later in June, but too late to report here (see our website instead). Whereas in March it talked about including a nursery within the housing scheme, in May it began floating a nursery and sheltered housing on the greens.

The Broughton Primary School community and other locals are worried. They value the old greens on their doorstep as a soft place for children to play and grow, particularly since a rising roll forced the school to build on its own playground four years ago.

There are 5 issues here: the stables; the housing scheme; the nursery; the primary school; and the green playspace. Locals need to keep their eyes on all of them, and formulate a joined-up response to so-far disjointed CEC engagement.

## Concert hall plan sounds great

Representatives from the Impact Centre and David Chipperfield Architects presented developed plans to the New Town & Broughton Community Council in June.

Their project (behind the Royal Bank of Scotland and in the adjacent 35 St Andrew Square) will provide a new administrative and performance home for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, after a 20-year search.

It has been made possible by: £10M investment from the philanthropic Dunard Fund; £25M from the Scottish and UK governments, and City of Edinburgh Council (see Issue 265); and the cooperation of RBS. A further £10M is sought from trusts and private donors.

The latest proposals are over 3m lower than earlier ones, and feature 3 volumes carefully designed to complement, not overbear, Dundas House.

The ‘core-drum’, an elliptical 1,000-seat concert hall, prioritises good acoustics, and features flexible seating arrangements which in some configurations ‘envelope the stage’. A smaller, 200-seat studio/rehearsal space will be excavated underground.

Public access will be from the North, South and East, with another ‘potential entrance’ available through the banking hall at RBS’s discretion. Servicing will be via Elder Street.

Materials include pre-cast concrete using local stone. Further details (and visualisations) will be available when four planning applications are submitted this month. If all runs smoothly, the centre could be finished in 2021.

To *Spurtle*’s eye it looks like an ingenious solution to a difficult space. Its combination of ‘performativity’ and reserve, public and private, accessibility and control, well suits what remains a city of both Festival glad-rags and Harris tweed underpants.

## Council grasps the nettle of short-term lets

A retrospective change of use application to run flats in Baxter’s Place as short-term holiday lets will go before a Planning hearing this month.

The step (unusual for such a comparatively small proposal) has been taken because councillors on the Development Management Subcommittee say the case has important implications for how rules are interpreted right across the city (see our website 4.6.18, 6.6.18).

The properties at 7–8 Baxter’s Place were converted in February 2016, and currently comprise 6 flats with 52 beds in 12 bedrooms. The revised proposal is for 5 flats with 48 beds in 10 bedrooms, and a permanently staffed reception area (Ref. 15/01238/FUL).

The plans strike many as overcrowded and underloo-ed, and neighbouring residents within and adjacent to the building have already suffered months of noisy, anti-social, drunken behaviour by visitors. Corks, bottles and other debris thrown up from windows have blocked gutters and caused roof damage. Permanent neighbours are angry that Planning officials misunderstood their number and position relative to the party flats, and completely overlooked their many complaints.

Cllr Booth said the case ‘encapsulates many issues of real concern to residents and community councils in the city-centre area’. A hearing would help to clarify areas of emerging policy, particularly Local Development Plan Hou 7’s role in preventing deterioration of residential amenity in a mixed-use area. All agreed.

In a separate case, the same developer seeks permission to run the next-door 2–3a Blenheim Place as a 7-bedroom hostel (18/02357/FUL). He proposes access via an adjacent but separately owned common stair. Neighbours are not delighted at this prospect.

Cllr Mowat says there is a clear pattern emerging of CEC refusals for short-term lets in common stairs. Hou 7 was pivotal in the rejection last month of a proposal to run a tenemental one-bedroom flat on Antigua St as an AirBnB (our website 12.6.18). This gives grounds for hope, as does Barcelona council’s tough new approach to registration and regulation of AirBnBs – see [bit.ly/2tdo3Qx].

## News from the bins

At a recent meeting of the Waste Forum (we know how to have a good time), *Spurtle* extracted the following statistic.

Of Broughton and Hillside's communal-binloads of dry recycling (not food or gardening), around 15% are rejected due to excessive contamination with the wrong waste.

Obviously, this includes small items like yogurt pots, and large items like unwanted Chieftain tanks, but also – annoyingly – non-degradable plastic binbags used by well-intentioned folk to carry their recyclable stuff out of the house. Take your bag home and use it again!

In related news: to continue using a brown bin for garden waste, you will now need to pay an annual £25 charge. This will save the Council £1.3M per year. You have until 22 July to register for the improved, fortnightly collection service. Details at: [bit.ly/2JO3EsF].

Finally, we learn that CEC Waste officials may require parking attendants to regularly report overflowing or damaged bins as part of their daily routine. This practical change could be included in revised terms when the contract is next assessed in 2019.

## Look out for: Fulmars

Birdwatching in Edinburgh is full of surprises, thanks, not least, to our small but persistent population of Fulmars. These gull-sized birds are more closely related to Albatrosses, a family that shares the name 'Tube-noses' due to the shape of their nostrils.

Unlike gulls they do not scavenge on land. These are birds that cover thousands of miles each year using tiny updrafts from the waves to effortlessly quarter the northern oceans looking for food. So why are they to be seen in Edinburgh?

The reason seems to be Salisbury Crags, where they nest. This is obviously an ideal site, and for birds that can travel all the way to Norway in search of food, it is no distance across Broughton or Leith to the sea. Nesting on sea cliffs is a precarious existence, and such birds need to be long-lived to be successful breeders. Fulmars are no exception, and, anecdotally, can live for up to 50 years, often with the same mate.

Many cliff dwellers are easy victims for predatory birds, but not Fulmars. They store rich foul-smelling oils in a pouch in their stomach. This is a portable energy source, and, more frighteningly for would-be predators, can be sprayed, instantly disabling and downing aggressors. Their name comes from the Norse for 'foul gull' as a result. It is however a wonderful thing to have these ocean nomads crossing and indeed breeding in our city. — *Miles Forde*



Image: Wikipedia, creative commons [https://bit.ly/2ldgPSh].

## Future of 'Registers Campus' still not clear

In Issue 274 we reported an assertion by TH Real Estate's Martin Perry that civil servants will quit General Register House at some point after 2021.

Since then, we've dug deeper. Through a PR intermediary, Perry stuck by his claim, saying current occupants had told the Registers Lane Development Group (comprising local stakeholders in the area) they were 'keen' to occupy purpose-built offices elsewhere after the next Census.

We asked National Records of Scotland for confirmation. A spokeswoman told us: 'Although we keep our estates and accommodation strategy under constant review, we have no current plans to move out of General Register House or New Register House.' This doesn't contradict Perry's recollection, but neither does it quite match it. It sounds more like the squelch of a cricket ball hitting a dead bat.

A report to the Council's Economy Committee (19.8.14, Item 7.1) sheds a little light. Para. 3.17 states that 'these important buildings [including General Register House, Back Dome, Archivists' Garden, New Register House] provide opportunities for redevelopment, creating a significant footprint of activity and increasing public access to valuable records and archives and creating key linkages between the St James Quarter and the historic Registers Campus'. If anything, that suggests NRS staying put but with redesigned routes past and through.

Para. 3.32 concedes 'Further discussion is required with National Registers of Scotland following the completion of their accommodation strategy'. But, as we've seen, NRS's strategy is never complete since it is constantly reviewed.

Plenty of suggestive rumbles then, but for now THRE's 'future-proof' access arrangements must bide their time.



## Briefly



The proprietors of **Drummond Place Gardens** have applied for planning permission to add steel spikes to the currently **non-spiked** north, south and east sections of railing. **Riff-raff** from Scotland, Northumberland, Dublin, London, Dundonald and Great King Sts will soon have to **burrow their way in**, hide in other people's **picnic hampers**, or disguise themselves as **registered dogs**.

Public consultation on CEC's new concept design for **George St and the First New Town** has been rescheduled for Aug, after the school holiday. Sensibly, this will allow it to fall in step with timing of the **City Centre Transformation Project**.



New plans have been submitted to demolish and replace the old cottage and offices at **Boat Green on Warriston Road** (Ref. 18/02451/FUL; our website 13.6.18). **Northumberland Street Properties** proposes 11 two and three-bedroom flats on four storeys. Their plans are **not to everybody's taste** and, last time we looked, had attracted **9 messages of objection**.

Officials agreed over 3 years ago that **enhanced parking restrictions** were needed to prevent residents in narrow **Broughton PI Lane** being blocked in or out of their homes. But the same officials say they don't have resources to process the **Traffic Regulation Order** required for this change, and can offer no timetable for when they'll get round to it. City Centre Cllr **Alasdair Rankin** is looking into it.

Locals have until 22 July to choose between 2 options for a new pedestrian crossing at the junction of **London St and Drummond PI** [https://bit.ly/2JS05Id]. One is a fully controlled **puffin crossing** with anti-skid surface replacing setts and the removal of a total of **64m of parking**. The other entails an uncontrolled **raised crossing** with extended pavements narrowing the road by over 9m. It would involve losing less than **1m of parking**, and by tightening the turn into London St would further slow traffic. *Spurtle* prefers **Option 2**, with its additional potential to slow traffic speeding out of London St and into **Dublin St**.

# Moreover ...

The former bridalwear shop at **109 Broughton St** will open shortly as East Side Yoga. Last we heard, the opening date remains flexible.

Consent has been given for demolition of **11, 11A and 11B Gayfield Sq** (former galleries and workshops), and **erection of 11 flats** (Ref. 17/03392/FUL; our website 14.8.17). The proposed materials have been changed from buff brick to **ashlar stone at the front**. 'The contemporary design of the building,' says a Planning report, 'contrasts with the surrounding traditional form whilst respecting the historic and architectural importance of the surrounding area'. Before building starts, CEC seeks assurances about the quality of **new materials** and safe removal of any **contamination** in or below the old structure. There were 11 messages supporting the plans and 23 against.

A developer seeks **change-of-use consent** to convert 3 picturesquely ramshackle workshop/garage properties at **9-10 W. Scotland St Lane** into flats, entailing internal and external alterations (Ref. 18/02697/FUL).



As we went to press, **1-6 Canonmills Bridge** was disappearing fast before our eyes. Campaigners who had fought to save the undistinguished but much loved former premises of **Earthy** have finally thrown in the towel (our website 29.5.18). A new combination will rise soon. How many decades, centuries or millenia will pass before this too becomes an undistinguished but cherished local landmark?

Operators of the pop-up shanty boozers atop **Waverley Mall** want to drop the 2 weeks they lose money in during Jan and add 2 weeks they expect to make profits in during Jun (Ref. 18/02610/FUL). Meanwhile, owners of the Mall itself want to **refurbish the interior** and add a new green-roofed storey on the top, making room for extra commercial and cinema space inside, and performance space outside (Ref. 18/02748/FUL).

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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, 20 August 2018  
Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

[leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates](http://leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates)



Leith Central Community Council

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## Ben Macpherson MSP

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## Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

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