

Spurtle



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June
2019

No 285

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

STAND BY FOR DISRUPTION

Simultaneous programmes of roadworks and closures will adversely affect Broughton over the coming weeks.

Ground and site investigation works preparing the way for tram construction began on 20 May. Some 25 sites between York Place and Newhaven (including Elm Row and Leith Walk) will be dug up and rummaged about in.

Various kinds of carriageway resurfacing, public-realm improvement, and traffic-signal upgrades began on 27 May and will impact: Abercromby Place, Dublin Street, Albany Street, Broughton Street, East London Street, Annandale Street, Hopetoun Street, McDonald Road, Broughton Road, Bonnington Road, Newhaven Road, and Pilrig Street. The works anticipate motor traffic being displaced by tramway construction.

Scottish Gas Network is relaying mains on Forth Street. The work began on 13 May and is due for completion by 8 July. Local residents are frustrated by the last-minute communication of this schedule, despite repeated requests in the weeks before.

Since we last reported on Leith Street's closure in May (Issue 284), a second closure has been announced, this time from 7pm on 6 June till 7am on 11 June. Access by foot and bike will be maintained, although cyclists must dismount. In a letter to stakeholders, Edinburgh St



James contractors Laing O'Rourke apologised for any inconvenience, and for the fact that news of the disruption appeared in (ahem) 'local media' before an official announcement was made.

DRUM DUMPED IN STEAD'S PLACE HEAVE-HO

Edinburgh University has pulled out of its arrangement with the Drum Property Group to develop postgraduate student accommodation, a hotel and shops at Stead's Place.

In a terse statement on 13 May, an EU spokesperson told *Spurtle*, 'The University has kept a close interest in the proposed plan for Stead's Place and, after giving it careful consideration, has decided not to pursue that interest any further.' It's a significant stab in the teeth for Drum, which nevertheless is smiling through with a promise of alternative partners waiting in the wings.

The Stead's Place proposal generated enormous local opposition led by the Save Leith Walk campaign, and was refused planning consent by the Council in January.

Following that decision, it is understood EU had principled misgivings about the plan, and wanted Drum to take greater account of local opinion and official guidance. We hear doubts were also increasingly voiced by EU staff and students, and a looming public-relations bürach was clearly in the offing. So, when Drum decided to appeal the case with the Scottish Government, the University decided enough was enough.

This is not a fatal blow to Drum's ambitions, but it will add nothing to the persuasiveness of their case before the Reporter.



'SIX TIMES' BACK IN THE SWIM



Four Antony Gormley figures, absent from the Water of Leith since 2012, were released back into the wild last month at Bell's Mill, Stockbridge, Puddocky, and Bonnington. Locals may not trap them without a special licence. Each figure is modelled on the artist's own body, a fact which has in the past led to a degree of frivolous speculation. Having met Gormley at the press launch of 'Six Times' back in 2010, *Spurtle* can confirm that he does not have abnormally large ears.

A TIME AND A PLACE

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced in April that the Scottish Government will undertake

detailed consultation on regulations to control AirBnB-style lets.

In May, Edinburgh Council issued a report about the effects of short-term lets on communities and housing, and outlined policies to deal with them [bit.ly/2Yndjxf].

Now, a new group set up by locals is responding to problematic whole-property short-term letting, particularly in shared tenements.

PLACE (Protecting Liveable Affordable Communities in Edinburgh) seeks to reinforce current and mooted Council policies. It is campaigning (and will petition) for:

- Licensing: up to four whole-property short-term lets per property per year, up to two per month.
- Planning permission requirement for more than four lets per year.
- Online confirmation: health and safety, ownership, insurance.
- No advertising without a licence.
- Protect housing (especially affordable and accessible stock) by restoring presumption against change of use from residential purposes.

To find out more, see PLACE Edinburgh on Facebook and @PLACEEdinburgh on Twitter.



Briefly



Many thanks to reader **Steph Borer**, who, following Issue 284's item on ladybirds, correctly assumed we'd be interested in this **unusual sextette** spotted locally in May. The collective noun for these creatures is, appropriately, a **loveliness**.

It was good news for local eateries in the **Edinburgh Evening News Restaurant Awards** last month. In its first year of operation, **Broughton St's Fhior** scooped two awards: one for Edinburgh Restaurant of the Year, and another for **Stuart Skea** as Sommelier of the Year. In the same competition, the **Bearded Baker** on **Rodney St** was named Edinburgh's Best Café/Deli.



Citadel Arts Group will perform Jim Brown's *Sea Changes* at the **Leith Dockers Club** on 12 and 13 June. The new play is inspired by the memories of those who worked aboard the fisheries research vessel **SS Explorer**, which is now being restored in **Leith dock**. An accompanying book will be launched on opening night. **Pictured (L-R)** are: fireman John Reid, cook Jim Yorkston, and cast member David McBeath.

A **skimming device** was discovered on a Bank of Scotland ATM in **St Andrew Square** in April. ATM users should: shield their PINs when entering; **avoid too-close strangers**; never accept help from strangers to extract a card; look for **loose fittings/signs of tampering**; take extra care at weekends; report retained cards to your bank asap; check bank statements regularly.

The Corporate Policy & Strategy Cmte approved a **tourism policy** on 17 May. Key points include: making Edinburgh more of a **gateway to other places**; balancing the capital's tourism economy and residential amenity; introducing a **Transient Visitor Levy**; 'inclusive, sustainable, good [tourism] growth'. Who defines *good* growth, and why is a successful future never envisaged without it?

Tesco at **7 Broughton Rd** has appealed to the Scottish Government against Edinburgh Council's refusal to grant **extended delivery hours** [bit.ly/2HqcFYC].

Transforming Edinburgh

A proposed strategy for the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation is open for consultation until 28 June [bit.ly/2JTQpcN]. Key elements of the 10-year programme include:

- A network of connected, car-free streets at the heart of the Old and New Towns.
- Enhanced central streets and spaces for 'rest, relaxation and play'.
- A network of seamless, segregated cycle routes, starting with a new Meadows to George Street link.
- A free city-centre hopper bus.
- New lifts/vertical connections to improve accessibility across Edinburgh's hilly topography.
- A new walking/cycling bridge connecting Old and New Towns at the east end of the city centre.
- Significantly less on-street parking except for residents and blue-badge holders.
- A Low Emission Zone and less motorised traffic.

Some of these proposals will divide opinion between different kinds of stakeholders. Taken in combination, private and commercial drivers in particular will face challenges to established practices and mindsets.

However, faced with a growing and ageing population, the desirability of a pleasant place to live, legal obligations on air-quality, and climate change, radical changes are necessary. Inevitably, at some point, *any* Edinburgh council would have to grab these issues by the scruff of the scrotum. We applaud this Administration for grasping the urgency of the problems and having the political nerve to address them.



Edinburgh begging: no easy solutions

Research commissioned by Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership into *Street Begging in Edinburgh* was published earlier this year. The full report and a summary are available online here [bit.ly/2YrR2y4].

Conducted by Shelter Scotland, this is the most comprehensive review of begging in a UK city in recent years.

At least 420 people 'experienced begging' here between November 2016 and October 2018. Most did so out of poverty, or to afford food or an addiction. Others were impelled by a variety of 'experiential, economic, and emotional' reasons. Adverse childhood experiences, and mental and physical health issues were common.

The report does not look in detail at rough sleeping, but often touches on individuals' complicated and changing accommodation journeys. For example, 43% of people begging have experienced rough sleeping; but not all people who beg and sleep rough lack available accommodation.

The report makes strategic and operational recommendations, none simple. However, many of them stress a need for better support-staff training; continued multi-agency/Council/third-sector cooperation to improve and avoid duplication of services; patient, proactive, and individually tailored support for people begging.



News from the bins

At last month's Residents' Waste Forum in City Chambers, topics discussed included:

- The app map for reporting overflowing communal bins does not match actual locations and types of bins. (However, a 'bin audit' is underway.)
- The Council has a mix of differently sized, side-served communal bins, and is now deciding which to prefer. If large bins are picked, further investment will be made, including a bin-washing vehicle and a refurbishment programme.
- Various parks have had waste bins moved to the periphery (due to health and safety concerns about the vehicles required to service them moving among park users). Many residents report increased mess resulting from the change. More in Issue 286.
- A new, city-wide 'zero-tolerance' approach to trade-waste bins on pavements outwith designated collection hours is imminent, following widespread abuse of the old system.
- The new Energy from Waste facility at Millerhill in East Lothian is up and running, so most of Edinburgh residents' rubbish (c.140k tons pa) will in future be incinerated not sent to landfill. Uses are being sought for the resultant ash.
- Seafield and Bankhead facilities are being upgraded.
- The Routesmart app, whereby waste operatives can relive their childhoods spent playing Pacman, except with communal bins instead of 'power cookies', is being rolled out after very successful results during testing.— CR

Inside Out 10 years on – Phase 2 begins

It is 10 years since Broughton St Mary's Parish Church completed Phase 1 of its Inside Out project to improve facilities within the building for community use and provide an income stream from lets to fund congregational activity (Issue 133 and [bit.ly/2Q3ipM0]).

Phase 2 is now being planned. Wham Architecture has been appointed to oversee rewiring, re-equipping and redecoration of the sanctuary and vestibule.

Inside Out's overall aim is to increase engagement with the local community, and to raise the church's profile. Work will take place from May to July 2020.

More immediately, the Kirk session is considering proposals from two design firms to improve external signage around the building. The intention is to highlight the 'active, welcoming, inclusive, lively, caring congregation' within. New display boards should be in place after the summer.



Briefly



Many thanks to reader Steph Borer, **again**, who spotted a one-sided sparrowhawk/pigeon encounter at the end of **E Claremont St** last month. The hawk then removed its meal to the comfort of a Post Office van on **Cornwallis Pl**, where this photo was taken. Sparrowhawks achieve an attack speed of over 31 mph, making a nonsense of the Council's **20's Plenty** campaign.

K&S Mir Ltd seeks planning consent to convert a guest house providing **temporary accommodation** for homeless people into 4 one-bedroom flats and 2 studio flats at **8 Hopetoun Cres**.

CEC's **Parks, Greenspace & Cemeteries Dept** is required to generate an extra £150k pa from citywide catering concessions. **St Mark's and King George V Parks** are among those in line for snack vans. There are mixed views on this within **Leith Central CC**. Some welcome the initiative; others fear **increased litter for little benefit**. See [bit.ly/2HBzrOR].



Would strengthening your core float your boat? Does the thought of naval exercises tip you over the edge? Thistle St Lane's **The Pilates Attic** is now offering Pilates sessions on paddle boards on the Water of Leith. See: [bit.ly/2VxnTjb].

At some point between 18 and 21 Apr, the front door of a main-door flat on **Heriot Row** was forced open. Jewellery worth £100k was stolen.

Most of the **Royal Mile plus the Grassmarket, Blackfriars, Cockburn, New, Niddry and Victoria Sts** closed to motor traffic on Sun 5 May. It was the first such monthly closure between now and Nov 2020, as Edinburgh Council pilots what a **city centre transformed** in favour of pedestrians and cyclists might feel like and how best it could be managed. The startling absence of **engine noise, fumes, and congestion** (of both roads and pavements) was a revelation.

Readers may recall the Council's decision in March to refuse planning consent for the change of use of a property on **E. Scotland St Lane** from garage-with-knobs-on to Class 4 business [bit.ly/2OkFNnh]. That refusal was upheld by the Local Review Body last month. No violins played in **Bellevue Cres**.

Licensing lacks transparency

At a recent Licensing Board meeting, a Broughton-based carry-out sought extension of its late-opening hours.

At the last moment, the applicant produced letters purportedly from neighbouring residents. These appeared to show the latter had no objection to the change.

The letters may well have been genuine, but no checks were made and a community-council representative present was not given an opportunity to question or examine the evidence. The extension was approved. New Town & Broughton CC will now raise its concern in writing with the Convener.

This is but the latest case of procedural murkiness within Licensing, a quasi-autonomous fiefdom operating alongside (rather than within and accountable to) the Council. Unlike with Planning, relevant background papers are not posted online for public scrutiny, and paper copies, available only to visitors and after a delay, are routinely rendered meaningless by redactions of detail.

The whole system (last reviewed by Government in 1982) is 'frequently impenetrable', says Ward 11's Cllr Mowat, and inconsistent between different local authorities. Many worry that it may also be vulnerable to abuse. Wholesale reform is overdue.

Capital divided by 10

In an exercise designed to stimulate debate, the Cockburn Association has issued a list of 10 buildings (or building types) that 'define' Edinburgh.

They are: St Margaret's Chapel; Gladstone's Land; City Chambers; University of Edinburgh Old College; Baron Ord's House (8 Queen Street); suburban villas; Victorian tenements; Cable's Wynd; bungalows; and the Museum of Scotland. For fuller descriptions and reasoning, visit [bit.ly/2QatrB].

Which 10 buildings (or types) best encapsulate Broughton? Here is *Spurtle's* provisional list: Royal British Legion, Rodney Street; Broughton Public School (154 McDonald Road); Corner Store (26 Spey Terrace); Sainsbury's Local (Shrubhill); Claremont Court; Miller homes; Victorian tenements; McDonald Road Library; 40-42 Broughton Street; 'Murphy's Bookend' (Hart Street). For fuller descriptions, reasoning, and an invitation to comment or compile your own list, visit our online article on 1 June.



Edinburgh on high: Portsmouth's Prudence

The three-building complex at 22-26 George Street is the fourth and final home of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, established by royal charter in 1783 for the 'advancement of learning and useful knowledge'.

No. 26 was originally built for the Edinburgh Life Assurance Company in 1908-9, and was designed in typical Edwardian Renaissance style by the prolific architect J.M. Dick Peddie (1853-1921). It is unusual in that it is built of white Portland stone – the only example in George Street, where local sandstone predominates. Gifford et al. in *Buildings of Edinburgh* describe 'On the circled corner a consoled drum and big copper dome, surmounted by Percy Portsmouth's bronze statue of Prudence'.

From a distance, this Prudence looks imperious, but close-to is both gentle and alluring. In allegorical terms, Prudence embodies 'past experience, present perspicuity, and future foresight' (Simon Cohens, *Renaissance Studies*). In art, she is often depicted carrying a mirror – thus illuminating past, present, and future – which sits well with foliage (possibly bay leaves of the laurel nobilis, but readers' opinions are warmly invited).

Perhaps the most striking work in Edinburgh by the joyously named Percy Portsmouth (1874-1953) is his 'Survival of the Spirit': figures of Freedom and Charity at the Scottish National War Memorial.— *JRM*



Moreover ...



Novelist and grammatical stickler **Charlie Stross** contacted *Spurtle* last month, urging readers to comply with a sign at the rear of the **Ingleby Gallery**: 'PLEASE NO BINS'. Would this mean filling or not filling them?

Plans to upgrade **George St and the First New Town** are now at the preliminary design stage, with core elements approved by the **Transport & Environment Cmte** in May [bit.ly/2VCwN3V]. Some elements require further detailed work, e.g. the **raised 'plazas'**. How can these 'reinforce pedestrian priority' despite their 'multi-function role'? *Spurtle's* thumbs begin to prick at this: 'Their scale is intended to support event activation at a smaller scale, at times when this is sought, with a lower level of impact on the remaining street. (The introduction of plaza areas would not preclude occasional larger events within the street, where this is appropriate and agreed).' Do we risk building-in irreversible **Festivalisation**. Plans will next go before T&E on 19 Sept.



While few will mourn the removal of the modern office block behind, more may regret **Warriston Cottage's** token survival at the corner of **Boat Green**. The rustic 18th-century structure was **undistinguished** in architectural terms [bit.ly/2WMLhQ1], but nonetheless a familiar and well-loved presence.

On the other hand, surely no-one will miss the crumbling hulk that was **14-16 Union St**. It is currently a deep hole and will shortly combine with **11 Forth St** to form 11 apartments.

The Council's refusal and enforcement of **Cornerstone Property Development's** hostel at **7-8 Baxter's Place** last Aug and the Scottish Government Reporter's upholding of that decision in Feb have now gone for judicial review at the **Court of Session**. Hostel activity stopped on Good Friday. **Cornerstone** has also applied to run the place as: (a) short-term lets 'by people living together as a family'; (b) a boutique hotel. It also aims to build a studio-flat extension at No. 5. **Residential neighbours** – concerned about potential noise, access, and antisocial behaviour issues – are backed by the **NTBCC**.

Spurtle 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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Printed by Minuteman Press, 63 Elm Row.

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LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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



Leith Central Community Council

Participate in local democracy.

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

Next meeting: 7.00pm on Mon 17 June in Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates



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Surgeries

Every first Friday 1-2pm Constituency office 166 Great Junction St	Every third Friday 1-2pm Stockbridge Library
Every second Friday 3.30-4.30pm McDonald Road Library	Every last Friday 4-5pm Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre

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Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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 Edinburgh EH5 1NF
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New Town and Broughton Community Council

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. The next meeting is on Monday 10 June at 7.30pm in **Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent**

www.ntbcc.org.uk