

# Spurtle



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**September  
2020**

**No 299**

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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free**

## HOMES-NOT-HOTEL OPTION FOR OLD RBS SITE

Developers of the old RBS site between Dundas Street and King George V Park will bring forward revised proposals.

The new Proposal of Application will run alongside Ediston and Orion Capital Management's long-anticipated full application and environmental impact assessment. It will float the idea of replacing the proposed scheme's upmarket hotel element with as many as 79 new dwellings, and entail yet more public consultation.

Ediston's Development Director Ross McNulty frames this as a prudent move, keeping options open at a very difficult time for the hospitality industry. It is not currently a preferred option, he says, nor is there any timetable for making such a decision one way or the other.

The project has until recently been known as New Town North, but is now styled as the New Town Quarter. Despite uncertainty as to its final composition, the developers express confidence about their 'robust' proposals in one of the UK's 'strongest and most resilient' economies. Those neighbours concerned about spill-over parking and pressure on services remain to be convinced.

For more on this story, visit [[bit.ly/31ju8gC](http://bit.ly/31ju8gC)].



## IN LINE FOR NEW CROSSINGS

A list of pedestrian-crossing improvements was agreed by the Policy & Sustainability Cmte on 9 August. Local examples, with expected dates for construction, are:

- Abercromby Pl close to Dublin St, signalised crossing, 2024/25
- Albany St/Dublin St junction – options being considered, 2021/22
- Annandale St, NW roundabout arm, options being considered, 2021/22
- Bellevue Pl at Bellevue – signalised crossing, 2024/25
- Dublin St (foot of) – upgrade for refuge island, 2023/24
- E London St at St Mary's RC Primary School – signalised crossing, 2024/25
- Inverleith Pl at Arboretum Rd – signalised crossing, 2024/25
- London St (Drummond Pl end) – raised table, 2020/21.
- McDonald Rd (at Broughton Primary School gate), options being considered, 2023/24
- McDonald Rd (at Broughton Rd), options being considered, 2023/24
- Pilrig St (at Cambridge Ave) – refuge island, on hold.



Image: Wikipedia [bit. Em9rrR].

## COMMUNITY HUB FOR POWDERHALL

The Council seeks planning permission to redevelop 165 Broughton Road as artists' studios, meeting rooms (with catering), and event spaces inside and out (20/03162/FUL).

The aim is for the Category B-listed Baronial stable block to form a cultural and community hub at the centre of new housing on the former refuse compactor site and adjacent bowling greens.

The complex – which has been funded by the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund and the Council's City Strategic Investment Fund – will be operational by the end of 2021. An announcement is expected later this autumn about a private contractor to manage it. For more details and links, visit [[bit.ly/3jcpOWR](http://bit.ly/3jcpOWR)].



## ADVENTURES OF THE LITTLE PEOPLE



Photo: Caroline Roussot.

The continuing enhancement of the Drummond Tennis Club grounds has attracted a very special audience of Lilliputian admirers. Here is a daring fellow, alighted from a helicopter, walking on a tightrope. Nearby is a friendly couple on a bench. Over there are intrepid figures who have scaled a virtual Matterhorn. There are others, and, as in the *Field of Dreams*, more will come. This joyous assembly is to be found on a recently renovated wall by the court. Non-tennis-playing children of all ages are welcome to visit between matches and view them – just ask a club member on-site for guidance. Thanks to Mr John Foxwell and some helpful elves, this wonderful oasis by East Scotland Street Lane is now regarded by some as the finest tennis club space in all Edinburgh. – JRM

## OH JOY, MORE OF THE SAME

Legal & General Investment Management Limited's Proposal of Application Notice has been accepted (20/02952/PAN). An online exhibition and 'interactive session event' about plans for the former Debenham's at 109, 110, 111 Princes Street will take place at some time (TBC) in late August or early September.

The aim is to form a hotel with rooftop bar and restaurant, plus a restaurant, bar, retail, flexible meeting/event space, and health suite on lower floors.

This exciting prospect will complement renovation of the Jenner's building at 47–48 Princes Street. Here, Danish businessman Anders Hoch Povlsen proposes a stimulating hotel, rooftop restaurant, cafes and luxury shops, not necessarily including Jenner's.

If approved, both would compete with the new Edinburgh St James's forthcoming innovative combination of hotels, restaurants, cafes and shops. Edinburgh will thus soon be spoiled for choice when it comes to conviviality and retail experiences, all of them financially predicated on pre-Covid-19 notions of footfall and customer behaviour. What could possibly go wrong?



# Briefly



**Optimum Design & Build Ltd** seeks planning permission for a 4-bedroom dwelling behind **Claremont Cres** and opposite **62 Broughton Rd** (20/03029/FUL). Readers have generally welcomed the potential trapezoid that seeks to sit 'comfortably in its context' [bit.ly/3kNfjdZ].

**York Place** (Conan Doyle bar to Elder Street) has closed to westbound traffic until 11 Oct. Diverted traffic will proceed via **Broughton St** and the **New Town** during new footway, cycleway, drainage, tram-maintenance, and active-travel-link-investigation works. For chapter and verse and **Council good cheer**, visit [bit.ly/2PV0whC].

Planning permission is sought for the two tram stops at **Lindsay Rd** and **Ocean Drive** (20/03058/PA; 20/03059/PA). These are the first of 8 new stops which will eventually connect **Europe**, **Newhaven** and **Leith** to civilisation in Broughton.

NTBCC backed *Spurtle's* objections to adverts on the **Mansfield Pl** roundabout (Issue 298). It said they may be appropriate in some places, **but not here**. The proposal has since been quietly dropped without explanation.



Lothian Buses has put the former **Tramways Bowling Club** on the market for offers over £120k, complicating plans by local residents for a **community-run green space** here. Their efforts continue [bit.ly/3kOxtMA].

The **London St Sauna** reopened for business last month with a polite sign on the window asking customers to **maintain 2m distance**. Notwithstanding practical problems in implementing such guidance in confined spaces, many have been left scratching their heads as to why **operations of this kind** have been allowed to resume before gyms, yoga studios, swimming pools, and indeed physical community councils. Photos of the sauna sign proved popular on *Spurtle's* social media, with over **64k views** in 3 days and many **imaginative suggestions** for new ways with litter pickers.

## Cones and moans

To the relief of some and the disappointment of others, Broughton Street will not receive new cyclist- and pedestrian-focused measures under the first round of Spaces for People arrangements.

However, Transport & Environment Cmte vice convener Karen Doran (Ward 11) understands it is a strong contender for inclusion in a second round using the remaining £400k of the original £5M from Sustrans and the Scottish Government [bit.ly/32c7Bl8].

The scheme aims to enhance ease and safety for those avoiding public transport, private vehicles, and each other during the Covid-19 pandemic. But not everyone's thrilled at the resulting practicalities and aesthetics. Businesses tend to howl at insufficient consultation, others moan about opaque decision making and timing, others still say the needs of disabled people have not been adequately considered.

Proponents say over 4k suggestions from the public take time to process, and whilst responses may sometimes be imperfect and hastily planned, these temporary changes are nonetheless urgently needed.

*Spurtle* estimates that £400k would pay for over 20k highway-compliant traffic cones ... easily enough to place one every 2cm in 2 lines on both sides of the road between York Place and East London Street.



## Cycle route opens despite campaigners' uphill struggle

After two years' consideration, Scottish Ministers last month approved City of Edinburgh Council's design for the cycle route between Greenside and Calton Rd.

Cycling campaign group Spokes's previous objections to provision in this area have included:

- unsafe exit from southbound cycleway just before Greenside Row;
- lack of clear route from Leith St north onto Leith Walk cycleway
- unsafe northbound access to cycleway from Calton Rd;
- lack of separate signals for cyclists and pedestrians at Greenside Row;
- removal of bus lanes and Greenway restrictions, which now force cyclists into other traffic on stretch from Calton Rd to Waterloo Pl. A temporary cycle lane here may result from the Spaces for People consultation.
- no cycling provision at the Leith St / Waterloo Pl / Princes St / North Bridge junctions;
- unclear (if any) access from Leith St onto James Craig Walk.

Spokes nonetheless welcomed opening of the route on 13 August. For all its shortcomings, it separates cyclists and motorised traffic part of the way. Whether pedestrians will now heed or respect the layout is another matter.

## Dreaming of an all-right Christmas

The Council's Policy & Sustainability Cmte last month approved a report updating plans for Edinburgh's Christmas & Hogmanay 2020/21 [bit.ly/34c2OD0].

With everything strictly dependent on public-health guidance, it sketches a pandemic-sensitive programme of local makers/producers at pre-existing market sites across Edinburgh. The Big Wheel and Star Flyer will likely remain in E. Princes St Gdns, subject to planning permission and despite Green and Conservative attempts to relocate them. The Hogmanay Street Party is cancelled, replaced by 'visually spectacular moments'.

There is a spectacular lack of detail in the report, not least about whether the Market element is downsized or simply dispersed. In any case, it should be remembered that the Council has already tied itself in legal knots over staging Edinburgh's Christmas, and cannot cut ties with Underbelly however much many might like it to.

The Cockburn Association and 5 city-centre community councils made recommendations in response to the report [bit.ly/3aG9ESq] They recommended reducing the overall size of the Market, but endorsed its: (a) prioritisation of public health in light of Covid-19; (b) strict adherence to normal planning and licensing requirements; (c) preference for local businesses. On this they would have gone further (to 60% local), but Edinburgh shop owner Kevin Buckley later wrote in the *Evening News* that, in hard times, many local businesses could not afford to hire a stall or invest in extra stock, particularly given the risk of event cancellation. Doubts have also surfaced regarding the wisdom of clustering food and drink outlets given apparent connections between them and renewed virus outbreaks.

The report received (and in part derived from) cross-party support. We take at face value the good intentions of those who contributed to it. However, there will be little time for officials, politicians, and residents to scrutinise finalised plans when they appear. When that process begins, we hope to witness principle and pragmatism hand in hand, not another damaging, disorganised, profit-driven debacle. In a world struggling with a pandemic, the stakes could not be higher.



## Grand old lady's imposing back side

Most readers know the imposing Italianate Renaissance-style elevation of the transmission/grid substation at 95 McDonald Road. But plans to upgrade cabling for this grand old lady now shed new light on the building's imposing other elevation at the rear [bit.ly/3b0KCxE].

Meanwhile, our photograph, taken in February, scarcely does justice to the structure's cavernous interior, or to the maze of tunnels which radiate from it across Edinburgh, just below street level.

The Category B-listed McDonald Road Electric Power Station was built in 1898–99 for Edinburgh Corporation, supplementing another at Dewar Place to supply power for street lights, and domestic, commercial and institutional consumers. The original mechanism remained intact until 1971.



## Briefly



Edinburgh World Heritage has appointed **Christina Sinclair** as its new director from 2 September. Aberdeenshire-born Sinclair has degrees from Edinburgh and Dundee Universities in architecture (MA BArch) and European Conservation (MSc with Distinction), and was most recently employed as a Heritage & Design Advisor at **Scottish Borders Council** and as a Built Environment Expert at the **Design Council**. She describes herself as 'passionate about the value of our heritage – how it contributes to our communities, our pride of place, our identity and our quality of life. 'I'm also a strong advocate for the same benefits that high quality new architecture can bring, and how this can both further enrich our historic places and better engage communities.' An **early and eye-catching** initiative in her new role has been a pledge to improve EWH's engagement with **BAME communities**. As part of this, the heritage body is 'considering a commission in response to the Black Lives Matter movement', with more details to follow in the autumn.

The prospect of work starting on **Broughton Rd's Powderhall Stables** (p. 1) has prompted concern among parents at **Broughton PS**. They're already worried by the combination of narrow pavements and increased traffic flow hereabouts, and fear **cramped pedestrian routes** will only get worse during the construction period.

**Secure bike hangars**, with spaces rentable for £72 pa, have started to appear across the city. Local ones **will mushroom** at Bellevue Rd, Claremont Cres, E London St, W Montgomery Pl, and St Stephen St. Visit [sforce.co/3h0pOZm] to book a place.

Architect David Chipperfield's plans for a 1k-seat concert hall off **St Andrew Sq** are being reduced after complaints from Nuveen, developers of the unassuming **Edinburgh St James complex** and Golden Turd hotel next door. Under **revised proposals**, the studio, rehearsal rooms, workshop, and café/bar may be dropped. The **Dunard Centre** is now not expected to open until 2025.

MacNaughtan's on **Haddington Pl** reopened last month with temporary hours of 1–5pm, Tues–Sat. Entry is regulated by **traffic lights** at the door. Hand sanitiser, disposable masks, air filtration, and plastic screens mean there's **never been a better time** for rummaging through storey books.

## Solutions sought for tramwork disruption

Community Councils along the route of the tramline extension regularly meet the Trams Team (TT) to monitor progress and discuss. The last meeting for which minutes are available was in late July.

New Town & Broughton CC brought up signs on Queen Street announcing Leith Walk's closure, signs which implicitly encouraged drivers to cut north through the New Town.

Few mitigating measures (such as resurfaced roads) are in place to cope with this unforeseen increase in traffic, which on routes between Queen Street and Bonnington Road (particularly Bellevue Road) has caused disruption. TT said the intention had been to guide traffic towards Easter Rd (*Spurtle* is not clear how), but it had no power to force traffic along one route rather than another.

Meanwhile, residents report increased traffic levels: outside Broughton Primary School on McDonald Road, with some calling for 'speed cushions' (a softer alternative to sleeping policemen); Annandale Street; Bellevue Place; Broughton Road; Broughton and London Streets.

Leith Central CC raised problems caused by 'Wild West' parking on pavements, bus bays, and missing red lines along Leith Walk and side streets. Better information about and use of logistic hubs would help, as would more rigorous enforcement. TT will follow up, and seek Police help in reducing traffic speeds along Leith Walk. It will also seek ways other than pedestrian-cramping fences to protect traffic lights.

For the minutes in full, visit [bit.ly/2FF5zT5]. We'll report the next meeting (27 Aug) in due course.



## Lukewarm reception for Waverley concept

Edinburgh World Heritage has reiterated its response to Network Rail's 'Concept Masterplan' for Waverley Station [bit.ly/3kCf85n] in advance of further consultations in months to come.

It observes that no consent in principle has been given to demolish chunks of the Category A-listed station, and goes on to lament the potential loss of views (e.g. north-eastwards towards the Forth) if a new 2-level station roof obtrudes by an extra 2m. Supposedly 'protected' views across the 'Waverley Valley' in fact aren't, as evidenced by planning permission granted in 2019 for a scheme above Waverley Mall [bit.ly/30Ue8RW].

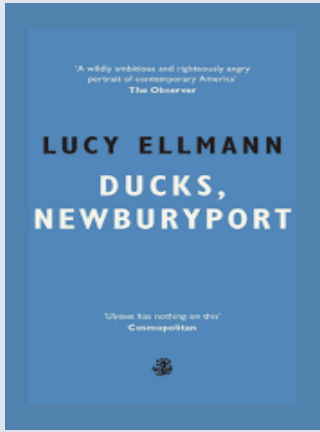
Informed by shortcomings in the old Royal High School controversy, EWH urges a 'measured' approach, with planning and heritage fully integrated into reaching decisions. Acknowledging the need for 'appropriate growth of rail traffic' (and the as-yet-not-understood effects on it of Covid-19), it offers to participate in future consultation to ensure 'this unique building, and surrounding landscape, are maintained and enhanced'.

As ringing endorsements go, it clangs. For previous *Spurtle* coverage of this topic, see [bit.ly/3izos84].





# Moreover ...



Congratulations to Broughton resident, *Spartle* reader, and renowned author **Lucy Ellmann**, whose remarkable novel *Ducks, Newburyport* has been awarded the prestigious 2020 **James Tait Black Prize** for fiction. Last year, her 'vast and righteously angry portrait of contemporary America' (*Observer*) won the **Goldsmiths Prize** and was shortlisted for the Booker. Ellmann's latest recognition comes from **Britain's oldest literary award**, with past winners including J.M.Coetzee, William Golding, Nadine Gordimer, Graham Greene, James Kelman, D.H. Lawrence, Muriel Spark, and Evelyn Waugh.

Council funding for **2 dedicated police officers** per ward to supplement Community Policing Team officers was cut on 1 Apr. **Focusing on local concerns, tackling anti-social behaviour, and liaising with community groups** will now be done by officers operating across wider areas, but Edinburgh Divisional Commander **Sean Scott** says identifiable teams and a visible presence will continue.

After health-and-safety briefings to all year groups, students returned to learning at **Drummond CHS** on 14 Aug. Head Jodie Hannan thanked her staff – including caterers, cleaners, and janitors – 'for being so positive, adaptive, and supportive'.

Anyone frustrated by **ill-tuned old tour buses** billowing fumes across the city with only 3 sodden passengers aboard will be dismayed to learn that the Council has **no powers to restrict their 'public-transport' business**. Hopefully, market forces and CEC's forthcoming Low Emission Zone regulations may prevail where common sense has stopped.

A proposal by **Community Partners Ltd** to 'install and display 4 non-illuminated roundabout sponsorship signs' (adverts) on the **Mansfield PI roundabout** has been withdrawn [bit.ly/3aE5bja]. No explanation was offered. Well done, the community!

**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.

**Post:** Spartle, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ.

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## LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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

Next meeting: to be confirmed. For local information, visit the website at

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>



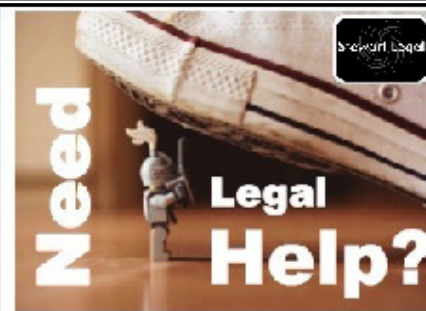
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## Ben Macpherson MSP

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  
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