

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER

Free

**February
2026**

No 358

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St MARK'S PATH REOPENS

Following pressure from local businesses, residents, consultants, individuals, media, officials, and ward and community councillors, the contractor CCG reopened St Mark's Path over the winter holiday period (see Issue 357 and bit.ly/StMPth).

It has now promised to maintain access along the route for most of the building phase until completion of the mixed nursery and older people's housing in spring 2027. A diversion around the site will be used for short periods during work on the Path itself.

Disruptive pile driving is expected to finish at the end of this month.

Closure of the busy route in late 2025 was an object lesson in how not to plan, execute and communicate suspension of an active travel route.

We still await Council confirmation of when Powderhall Stables will become operational.



ELREC LOOKS FORWARD TO END OF DAY

On 21 Dec, the *Daily Record* reported that, 3 months earlier, ex-Council Leader Cllr Cammy Day had used a fake name to complain about Cllr Ross McKenzie to the Ethical Standards Commissioner

The Commissioner found no grounds for the complaint but also realised Day was behind it and using a false name. When this became obvious, Day issued an 'unreserved apology' [bit.ly/DRCDay].

Three days later, Forth St-based Edinburgh & Lothian Region Equalities Council (ELREC) distributed a strongly worded statement.

ELREC voiced 'serious ethical and safeguarding' concerns and asked how many people had been harmed by Day's actions and what steps had been taken to prevent a repeat.

It called for Day's immediate resignation: 'We believe that individuals who engage in this kind of behaviour cannot be trusted and should not hold positions of power.'

Spurtle sought and received confirmation that ELREC's press release was genuine. Observers have since suggested to us that, as well as making general statements of principle, ELREC's public rebuke may reflect pre-existing tensions between individuals within and outwith ELREC itself.

TRAMMED IF YOU DO, TRAMMED IF YOU DON'T

The latest Trams to Newhaven snag dashboard was published on 23 Dec. It showed how many and what kind of problems have been sorted so far. Some observers welcome the work; others lament the slow rate of progress on repairs which shouldn't have been necessary in the first place.

Out of 155 critical issues, 84 have been fixed (the rest will follow by 31 Mar 2026). Out of 374 minor issues, 21 have been fixed (the rest will follow by 30 June 2027). Out of 337 minor issues which can be fixed as part of the Council's ongoing maintenance and repair programme (stifled laughter), 8 have been fixed.

Work on a further 32 issues is underway.

GROUND-BREAKING GLEE



Broughton Primary School's Glee Club accompanied singer/songwriter Dougie MacLean at a groundbreaking ceremony in Dec to mark construction starting on the Dunard Centre off St Andrew Sq.

Building the new music venue, the first purpose-built concert hall in Edinburgh for over a century, will take 4 years. Chief Executive Jo Buckley (also pictured above), said, 'This is not just a concert hall. It's a commitment to people, and to community, and to the transformational power of culture, which we believe really does change lives.'

Scotland's First Minister John Swinney, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland Kirsty McNeill, Edinburgh's Lord Provost Robert Aldridge, architect Sir David Chipperfield, CEO of Balfour Beatty's UK Construction Services Nick Crossfield, and NatWest Group CEO Paul Thwaite also attended. Mercifully, they did not sing. For a short video of proceedings, see [bit.ly/Dunard2512].

SEXUAL OFFENCES

On 23 Dec, a 22-year-old man appeared in Edinburgh Sheriff Court charged with 9 sexual offences.

Shashank Kasturi (22), who made no plea, was found guilty on 1 count of coercing a person into being present during a sexual activity, 2 counts of sexual exposure and 6 counts of sexual assault.

The incidents all took place on the evening of 12 Dec in Fettes Row, Inverleith Row, Saxe Coburg St, Dean Bank Lane and Royal Cres.

On 4 Dec, Aaron Strachan pled guilty to the rape of a 15-year-old girl in May last year.

What police described as a 'particularly harrowing' attack took place in a York Pl basement area.

Briefly



A fond farewell to **Janet Lee**, good neighbour and 'elder stateswoman' of **Cumberland St**, who died unexpectedly at home on 15 Dec.

After the Development Management Sub-Cmte's decision in Dec to refuse planning consent for part of the New Town Qtr development [bit.ly/eeekNTQ], **Ediston's Ross McNulty** told *Spurtle*: 'We're obviously disappointed with the outcome of the committee meeting. We'll take some time to reflect on the outcome and the debate at committee about the proposals before we decide how to respond. We can't help but observe that the committee missed an opportunity that would have quickly delivered **many new homes**, thus helping to tackle the housing emergency.'

A *Sprtle* reader recently told us this paper features too much on Planning issues and **not enough about dog dirt**. We will try to deliver a greater variety of scoops in 2026.

In the recent New Year's Honours, the Yard's CEO **Celine Sinclair** was awarded an OBE for services to children and families.

Plans are afoot to convert the Zabka (*little frog*) convenience store at **249-51 Leith Walk** into a restaurant. For the benefit of upstairs neighbours, **soundproofing** will dampen any additional croaks.

Council enforcement officers are investigating a possible **breach of advertisement control** after it emerged that Forrest's electronic billboard at **10 Croall Pl** may be operating without consent (25/00785/EADV). The previous 5-year permission expired in **May 2025** and does not appear to have been renewed. Forrest ran the billboard without consent here in 2019.

The Dublin St Social has moved into **26B Dublin St**, offering 'a haven where culinary artistry meets heartfelt hospitality'. Down in the basement is **Ollie's**, where alcohol and light bites meet a golf simulator. Best advice remains not to drink and drive.

Local resident Shane Carter has asked the **Accounts Commission** to investigate what he sees as Council failure to meet **Scottish Govt standards** for 'effectiveness, efficiency and economy in street cleaning and waste management'.

An eagle-eyed reader notes that when **16 Logie Green Rd** was auctioned on 9 Dec, its driveway beside the gable end was **not for sale**. She understands the vendor was Tesco, which makes us wonder whether the adjacent **Broughton Rd store** has plans to improve its awkward vehicle access on the northern side.

The **Adria Hotel's proposals** for a back-garden hilltop wellness centre at **11 Royal Ter** (including seating, sauna, shower, hot tub and cheap thrills for keen-eyed Fifers) proved unpopular with locals. Some 27 of them objected. The plans were withdrawn.

Commercial premises are up for sale at **46 Dundas St** (£225k+), **63 Elm Row** (£180k+), **22 Howe St** (£350k+) and **125 McDonald Rd** (to let, £75k pa; may sell).

The *Edinburgh Minute* recently steered readers to Bloomberg's **top-5 Edinburgh restaurants**. Included in the 'international hodgepodge of bonhomie' were Café Calton (**Calton Hill**) and L'Escargot Bleu (**Broughton St**).

Problem shared, problem halved

Homeshare Scotland is a new service established in Northumberland St by local resident David Hay. It matches older people who want companionship and help at home with younger people seeking a safe, comfortable and affordable place to live.

The level of help sought differs from person to person but includes up to 10 hours' weekly support with some combination of cooking, household or other tasks; and a presence in the house most nights. It does not include nursing or personal care.

Both parties are interviewed, carefully vetted, and matched to ensure compatibility before signing a mutually appropriate agreement. Homeshare then continues to monitor the arrangement for everyone's peace of mind.

Homeshare takes £120 a month from homeowners and £200 per month from 'sharers' plus a modest contribution towards shared expenses. Both sides stand to gain from companionship, structure, and a sense of community.

In purely financial terms, it's an arrangement which makes sense to many. Rents for rooms in shared central Edinburgh households can cost over £900 per month, not including bills, whilst Scottish residential care homes for self-funders charge between £1,400 and £1,600 per week.

Hay says the business is growing fast, with existing clients across Edinburgh and the Central Belt and another 16 currently being processed. With Scotland's older population continuing to increase, the homeshare model looks set to grow with it. More at [bit.ly/Hmsh].



Goodbye to unlovely garage

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation proposes demolishing a semi-derelict Territorial Army garage and 2 adjacent buildings at 70 E Claremont St (25/06663/FUL).



In their place it plans a new single-storey structure for 'multifunction assembly cadet training' with classrooms, offices, storage and 15 parking spaces.

A small on-site substation would be retained, as would existing walls and hedges except for a new gate layout and metal fence on W Annandale St.

Overall, the proposal represents a considerable improvement on what just about stands there now.

Changes to rules of the game

Planning Cmte members have agreed procedural changes to stop applicants 'gaming' the system.

In recent months, an increasing number of applicants have attached 20 or more messages of support to their applications. By doing so, they required officials to produce a report for consideration by councillors on the Development Management Sub-Cmte.

If the DMS refuses an application, the applicant can appeal it with a Reporter acting for the Scottish Govt. The received wisdom has been that a Reporter is more likely to uphold an appeal than councillors on the Council's Local Review Body, where cases with fewer than 20 messages may end up after an initial decision under delegated authority by an official.



The result, particularly since changes in the rules for short-term-lets, has been an enormous increase in workload for Planning officers and potential delays which could themselves trigger appeals to the Scottish Govt.

Following the Planning Cmte's changes at the end of 2025, where applications attract more than 6 messages of either support or opposition, a qualified Council official will assess the messages to ensure they contain material points.

The aim of this quality control is to weed out spurious representations before they can trigger time-consuming work which clogs the system further down the line.

Ian Andrew Robert Brown (7 April 1934–31 October 2025)



Ian Brown, who has died aged 91, was a retired eye surgeon and an engagingly eccentric figure held in great affection around Dublin St, Queen St Gdns and beyond. Instantly recognisable, striding out in his cap and brick-red trousers, he was known to a remarkably wide range of people.

An Edinburgh stockbroker's son, he was schooled at Daniel Stewart's College before reading medicine at the university. For his National Service (1958–60) he was attached as a medical officer to the 2nd Battalion 7th Gurkha Rifles on an island off Singapore.

Having married Elizabeth (Liz) Cooper in 1966, he had a distinguished medical career, practising as an eye surgeon in Shrewsbury and rising to be elected Master of the Oxford Ophthalmological Congress in 1993–94.

Ian and Liz returned to Edinburgh after he retired from the NHS. Liz developed dementia, and he looked after her until her death in 2017. Ian was devastated by the loss but determined to 'KBO' ('keep bu**ering on'), as he would say, and to go out and meet people.

It was only the tiniest exaggeration when, on hearing of his demise, the man behind the counter at Valvona & Crolla described him as 'a local legend'.

As well as his 2 children Andrew and Catherine, Ian is survived by 5 grandchildren: Jack, Flora, William, Alice and Mary.—*Andrew Brown*. [A longer version of this article appeared on our website on 1 Feb. 2026.]

'Frankenstein's monster' iced

The Development Management Sub-Cmte has refused plans for vacant office space at 57 Henderson Row (23/03716/FUL) after a critical report by Planning officials.

Royal London had proposed creating 65 build-to-rent flats (5 studios, 27 one-bdrm, 26 two-bdrm, 7 three-bdrm) by converting the basement car park, reallocating space on ground, 1st and 2nd floors, and creating a new double-mansard extension. There were 36 public objections to the design, which some locals likened to Frankenstein's monster.

Officials said the proposals would have harmful impacts on nearby listed buildings' settings and on the conservation area's character and appearance.

The 'top-heavy' double mansard failed to demonstrate 'a sensitive approach to incorporating or enhancing features worthy of retention or positively relate to its surroundings'. (Other locals claim to have seen dyed mullets more attractive than this.)

Future residents and their neighbours would have insufficient amenity (e.g. not enough light and/or room). Details of potential flood impacts had not been provided. Too few units were suitable for larger families. Not enough detail was provided about affordable housing.

In short, few will lament the non-appearance of this fashioned creature, but half made up.



Boxing – Eastern amateurs

From the Scotsman (15 Feb 1926):—The championships of the E. District of the Scottish Amateur Boxing Association concluded on Sat. night, when the bantam, light, middle, and heavy-weight titles were fought for in E. Claremont St Drill Hall, Edinburgh.

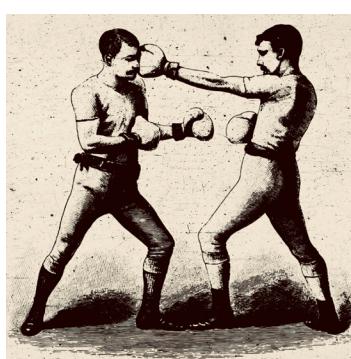


Image: bit.ly/20sbxr.

The best item was the bantam-weight final, which brought together two old rivals in J. Smith and J.S. Hill. Smith was fast, but Hill, who had the heavier punch, was just as clever, and was a clear winner on points. The light-weight championship provided the poorest final. R. Alexander fought dourly, but was lucky to get the decision. His opponent, V. Brown, who was clever and elusive, although lacking a punch, appeared to have a lead on points.

J.I. Robertson retained the middleweight title. H. Salmond created a surprise in the final by taking the bout the full distance. Robertson was the aggressor throughout, but Salmond, ducking and covering up well, prevented Robertson from getting over a knock-out blow.

One round decided the heavy-weight championship. J.I. Robertson and A.G.A. Mackay fought fiercely, but Mackay was rather wild with his heavy swings. Mackay fell on to his hands and knees, and Robertson struck him, but was not disqualified. At the end of the round Mackay retired, because of an injury to his ribs.

Mr C. Wood was master of ceremonies, and there were over 700 spectators.

Briefly



Scarlett Land & Development is marketing the sale this month of a 'prime hospitality development opportunity': offices at **16–26 Forth St**. The *Herald* reports plans to turn the 6 former townhouses into a **95-unit apartment** – a proposal which, while not removing current homes from the area, would add no new homes in a city centre with too few places to live. We'd also miss today's vibrant variety of businesses.

The London Persian Rug Company has opened a new boutique at **63 Dublin St**. The firm offers style consultancy, home trials, measuring, part exchange, **specialist cleaning**, repair and restoration, and bespoke rug design. Former occupant of the property **Factotum** has merged with another property sales and letting agency (Murray & Currie) and moved to **60 Queen St**.

An application to turn the former Coffee Angel café at **24–27 Brandon Ter** into a dental practice (25/04939/LBC) was refused on 21 Nov because the proposal (which included new ventilation louvres on the front elevation) would **harm the listed building**, fail to preserve or enhance the conservation area's appearance, and did not relate **sensitively and harmoniously** to the C-listed building as a whole. A new application (25/06193/LBC) relating only to the internal layout of the **proposed dental practice** was lodged on 25 Nov. It appears to differ very little (if at all) from the previous plan but has been approved. We are confounded.

The **Combined** beauty salon has opened on the ground floor of Canon Mill in **Eyre Pl**. At their current rate of expansion, there will soon be many more (affordable) beauty salons than (too expensive) hairdressers in Edinburgh. We **eagerly anticipate** a population of infilled, waxed, extended, sprayed, wrapped, exfoliated, **massaged**, Brazilianised, colonically irrigated and otherwise glowingly buffed people on Broughton's streets, all looking like billiard balls in a haystack.

The front-page image of a sparkling lamp on p.1 of Issue 357 ('Star of wonder') was taken at **Dundas House** in **Brandon St**, outside the traditional entrance to No. 20. In Dec 2025, 1,500 **BlackRock** workers completed occupation of the 13,000 sqm offices to the rear, refurbished by **Robertson Construction** at a cost of £48m. If staff can be winkled out of their gleaming new quarters **during working hours**, local shops and services should enjoy a significant upturn in custom.

We have grown used to high-net-worth owners extending luxury **pleasure palaces** beneath their London townhouses. On a more modest scale, work could start soon under **91 Annandale St** (25/05808/FUL). The owner has consent to convert an existing cellar into a habitable space and create a new basement (for bathroom and utility purposes) below the driveway. Will this precedent attract even more **oligarchs** to the neighbourhood?

Moreover ...



Retired heritage architect and former NTBCC Planning Convenor John Knight describes this newly painted fanlight on **London St** as 'one of the best pieces of exterior decoration in Edinburgh'. He says it's a superb example for other **New Town** householders. False fanlights weren't created to save on window tax but to match real ones nearby while disguising **unsightly features** behind, much like A-line skirts and moustaches.

Caledonian Heritable Ltd want to change **21 McDonald PI** from a car salesroom to a storage and distribution centre. Neighbouring residents want to know what will be stored and **how often/at what times** it will be distributed.

That sinking feeling ... A **Dublin St** resident who sought permission for their **newly installed ensuite** has been told the works have an adverse and unacceptable impact on the B-listed building's **special architectural or historic interest** (25/05315/LBC). The owner hadn't realised listed building consent was needed. Money, plughole, **horrible schadenfreude**.

On 24 Dec, 24-year-old Logan Carlin was convicted on 2 counts of **wilful fireraising**, one of which happened on 6 Mar 2025 in **Albert St**. His arrest came as part of Police Scotland's **Operation Portaledge**: 'an ongoing investigation into violent incidents in the East and West of the country'.

Evans Dakota Hotels last month clarified plans to demolish Centrum and BUPA Houses (**108-14 and 116 Dundas St**) and replace them with a hotel, ancillary bar and restaurant. Their PAN consultation took place on 21 Jan. The proposal supersedes an already consented scheme including **46 private and 12 affordable residential units**. This at a time when Edinburgh surely needs more homes more than more tourists. It is our understanding that EDH does not yet own the properties.

The **Calton Hill Conservation Trust** has reacted with disappointment to Council warm words about volunteers' efforts but precious little funding. At Dec's **Culture & Communities Cmte**, members backed the 'Parks and Open Space Volunteer Action Plan', which channels £1.25m via 'Council strategic planning' rather than going straight to the groups themselves. CHCT **mocked a report** by officers which dangled 'a hypothetical grant of £50k – from an as yet unidentified source and at an unspecified date – that might be divided among 85 community groups'. **All wrapping paper and no pressie**. In other news, CHCC is running 3 archaeology events in Feb. For details see [\[bit.ly/CHCTarc\]](https://bit.ly/CHCTarc).

Plans to convert Albany House (at the corner of **Albany and Broughton Sts**) into a 102-bdrm Premier Inn have been approved (Issue 352). The redevelopment (aimed at **'short, budget-stay visitors'** and embracing 'high environmental and sustainability standards for heating and hot water) will be ready in **summer 2027**. Are short guests more sustainable than tall ones?

Edinburgh history: AI-generated, sometimes peculiar, fascinating. See [\[bit.ly/Edimg\]](https://bit.ly/Edimg).

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Printed by Edinburgh Copy Shop, 52 St Mary's Street



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