

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

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TIME TO DECIDE ... COUNCIL PLAYS KISS, MARRY, PAUSE

Critics often accuse Edinburgh Council of generating overambitious plans which are personnel-intensive and time-consuming to develop but have little chance of being funded.

Addressing such concerns, Transport & Environment Cmte members last month agreed new *City Mobility Plan – Capital Investment Programme Prioritisation Outputs*. In other words, they chose which of 138 schemes to proceed with (PR) and which to pause (PA).

Below we show the most relevant to Broughton, with decision, Council cost estimates, and links to previous

Spurtle coverage. Full list and rationales at [\[bit.ly/CECskpiey\]](http://bit.ly/CECskpiey).

- City Centre Circulation Plan, PR, £10m–£30m (Issue 285)
- Powderhall Junction, PR, £300k–1m [\[bit.ly/PWHjunc\]](http://bit.ly/PWHjunc)
- George St & 1st New Town, PR, £30m–100m [\[bit.ly/GStcon\]](http://bit.ly/GStcon)
- St Andrew Sq (active travel link, George St–N. St David St), PR, £1m–3m
- Frederick St N (public realm and road resurfacing), PA for Financial Year 2025/26, £3m–10m
- E Princes St (reduce traffic dominance, improve active travel), PA, £10m–30m
- St Mark's Path (widen), PR, £300k–1m [\[bit.ly/StMkwide\]](http://bit.ly/StMkwide)
- Calton Rd (better footways, station–Leith St), PA, £300k–£1m
- Powderhall Railway (continue land negotiations), PR, £3m–10m [\[bit.ly/asnip\]](http://bit.ly/asnip)
- Queen St (further segregated cycleway), PA, £3m–10m
- Dundas St (segregated cycle infrastructure), PA, £1m–3m
- Waverley Valley (active travel bridge over station), PA, £30m–100m.



LEITHERS SAY NO TO OVER-THE-TOP TOWERS

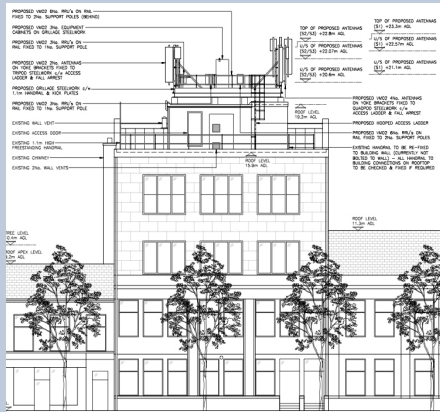
WHP Telecoms' bid to install 2 steel tripod towers carrying a total of 6 antennas on the roof of the 4-storey Inchkeith House Clinic at 139 Leith Walk (opposite Stead's Pl) to a height of 23.3m above street level, plus equipment cabinets and ancillary development, has been refused (25/01582/TELE). Good.

Officers decided in May that the plan's appearance and siting would be unacceptable for the Leith conservation area with detrimental effects on long and short views of the building underneath. The proposal attracted 164 letters of objection.

A lone supporter of the proposal said the looming student development nearby would make extra signal capacity necessary but hoped all mobile-phone operators could use the proposed towers, thus reducing the need for multiple masts elsewhere on Leith Walk.

In support of its application, WHPT had quoted Sir Keir Starmer's *Times* article (5.12.24) in which the PM criticised delays to new housing. 'Every road, pylon and mast – which connect people with opportunity – must jump through endless hoops, only to be opposed, dragged out, before eventually, if lucky, approved' (WHPT's emphasis).

Very often, impatient politicians and transient developers describe as 'red tape' what the rest of us think of as planning democracy.

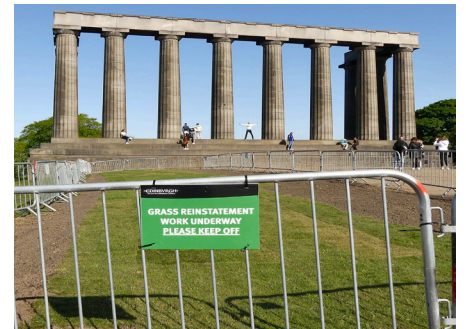


PUTTING THE CHAR IN CHARMING



After 10 years in business, Rosevear Tea has expanded to Bruntisfield, Broughton and the South Side and increased its range from 9 varieties to nearly 200. To guide customers and interested others through these tasty and health-boosting delights, founders Isabelle and Adam Rosevear (above) have for the last 3 months been joined by staff enthusiast Ella in a growing series of YouTube posts lasting 10–15 minutes. They're fascinating and rather charming. We recommend readers start with the first to be recorded in Broughton St [\[bit.ly/RVcuppa1\]](http://bit.ly/RVcuppa1) and continue with a browse through current stock on the website at [\[bit.ly/RVcuppa2\]](http://bit.ly/RVcuppa2).

ON THE OTHER SIDE



The Calton Hill Conservation Trust has topped off its first year as a charity by returfing 120m² of baked earth in front of the National Monument. The new grass – laid by members, corporate volunteers from Gleeds, and Council Park Rangers – is 'durable, dense, hard-wearing and self-restoring'. Whether it will prove any match for the concentrated footfall of global mass tourism remains to be seen.

This fresh patch adds to 160m² returfed nearby by the earlier Friends group. Additional areas will follow as and when funds (potentially matched by the Council) are secured. It is the latest in a series of practical and research projects completed by the Trust to help make the Hill 'cleaner, safer and more beautiful' [\[bit.ly/ChillCT\]](http://bit.ly/ChillCT).

Briefly



Reader Gerald Wells reports that **two Shona Kinloch pigeons** went missing from Elm Row in May: one sent for repair after vandalism, the other presumed doonapped. **Can any reader help?** Meanwhile, work began last month to change the downhill **cycle lane** dividing people at the bus stop from southbound buses. A new 2-way (**up-and-downy**) cycle lane behind the bus stop will replace it.

Officials have approved Dunpark's alterations for **1-1A Abercromby PI** to later convert it from shop/office to hotel/hostel (25/00765/LBC). The **Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland** objected, saying removal of this 'historically public use' would **negatively impact the character** of the street, World Heritage Site and conservation area.

Broughton St Mary's Parish Church seeks a new bookings manager. Details at [bit.ly/BrStM2025]. Applications by 6 Jun.

Everybody needs good neighbours. The Development Management Sub-cmte has recently refused consent for **3 domestic properties** in Spurtleshire to carry on being used – or change to use – as short-term lets. In each case, the **loss of residential property** had not been justified, and in one instance there would have been loss of local amenity. The cases – all represented by **commercial planning agents** – attracted messages of support from 59, 25 and 27 neighbours respectively. Many of them were identical or anonymous and unaddressed. Others stretched **notions of neighbourliness** to homes in Blackpool, Bristol, Turf, Twickenham, Surbiton, South Africa and Ontario.

Junior park runs for young people (aged 4–14) are now a regular feature on Sundays (9.30am start) in **Pilrig Park**. Their parents and carers are welcome to hobble along too. For the tidy-minded, **litter-picks** are held here on the last Sat of the month 10–11.30am. **Equipment and gloves provided.**

Following the untimely death of Convenor Cllr Val Walker, last month's **Culture & Communities Cmte** was cancelled. A decision on whether to ban dogs in Montgomery St Park (Issue 345) will now be made at the meeting on 5 June.

There are plans to convert retail premises at **373-75 Leith Walk** into Lounge 33: a hybrid coffee and record shop selling cold food and hot drinks, 7am–4pm (25/02205/FUL). No cooking fumes, live music or alcohol served.

On 8 May, councillors agreed that the non-attendance of Cllr **Bandel (Ward 10)** at Council meetings and committees since Jan 2025 is sufficiently explained by her **certified ill-health**. An update will come in Oct.

Citywide crisis, local repercussions

Faced with a steep rise this year in the number of homeless people and rough sleepers, Edinburgh Council (CEC) must balance separate statutory requirements to (a) house them and (b) provide them with suitable accommodation.

Officials reported the extent of these irreconcilable and growing problems to an emergency meeting of the Housing, Homelessness & Fair Work Cmte on 25 Apr [bit.ly/HHFWC425]. At 31 Mar 2025, CEC assessed: 14,219 individuals were homeless; already provided temporary housing for 10,400 homeless people (1,083 of them in unsuitable accommodation); and noted its own failure to accommodate 1,026 individuals in the previous 12 months.

Councillors responded by suspending repairs (again) in order to make available for reoccupation some of CEC's unsuitable 'void' properties. They also agreed to prioritise homeless people over most of the 25k other would-be occupants seeking social housing (to whom CEC also has statutory obligations).

Meanwhile, CEC will: run activities preventing homelessness; build new homes for rent; use £5m pa from the future Visitor Levy to grow housing stock; explore buying student and special-care accommodation.

Councillors approved the measures after much hand-wringing. They made provisos for regular review of the suspension, providing greater clarity about legislative compliance, and improving communication with frustrated stakeholders.

Several agreed that effective solutions require better funding from Holyrood. There were demands to ensure that, in the long term, CEC's provision of long-term permanent tenancies is not displaced.

Edinburgh's Homelessness Crisis affects everyone in the capital. As locals realise, its effects are already playing out across areas previously unexposed to obvious economic privation and domestic instability.



Spirit of the time – will it suffice?

In Feb, Council officers refused the British Medical Association's application to install an external platform lift and convert a window to a doorway in the façade of its Scottish HQ at 14 Queen St (24/05331/LBC).

They (and Historic Environment Scotland advisers) said the proposals failed to respect the A-listed building's special architectural and historic interest and the character and appearance of the conservation area (Issue 348).

The BMA has now returned with a revised scheme, again aiming to improve access for all but this time doing so where No. 14's original entrance was before alterations filled it in 1838–39 (25/02436/LBC).

Those 19th-century changes, BMA's agent says in an accompanying Heritage Statement, 'were not planned as a harmonious whole before construction began, rather they were adapted to meet the practical requirements of the then clients The present [2025] scheme is proposed in the spirit of the 1838 alterations'.

There are well-intentioned reasons for spoiling the visual impact of the building, which weren't sufficient to persuade last time. We wonder whether championing intrusive new changes because they match the spirit of unharmonious past ones will impress sceptics this time around.

Uncle Sam may say so long

The *Washington Post* reports that the US Consulate General on Regent Ter is threatened with closure. The diplomatic mission may shut under spending cuts being considered by the Trump Administration's Department of Govt Efficiency.

If confirmed, the closure would partly bear out the sentiment expressed in a floral tribute left outside No. 3 in early Mar (pictured). It was understood at the time to be a response to President Zelensky's reception at the White House and the subsequent suspension of US military support for Ukraine in the war against Russia.

There has been a US presence at the current address since 1951 and an earlier version in Leith from 1795. Closure would require the consent of Congress.

If the Consulate were indeed to cease on Regent Ter, the hostile vehicle mitigation bollards protecting it would not be necessary. Presumably, they would be removed, making possible a convenient rat-run over the setts between Carlton Ter and Regent Rd.

Who would bet against a high-level Regent Ter delegation visiting the Capitol soon?



Plastic in life, it's not fantastic

Bellevue-based artist John Finlay's painting *80%* won the Lyon & Turnbull Award at the Royal Scottish Academy's annual exhibition in May. The work comments on the fact that 80% of people in Scotland have microplastics in their bodies. Much of the work incorporates used bags, with the ball and chain symbolising our addiction to plastic products. Find out more on Instagram [@johnfinlay].





The plot thickens

The vacant site at 12 Blenheim Pl, for which planning permission was granted on appeal by the Planning Local Review Body in Apr.* is now for sale (Issue 350).

The empty plot – consented for Richard Murphy Architects’ 5-bdrm, 5-bthrm family home with no ‘detrimental impact’ on the site, area, or adjacent A-listed church (24/01889/FUL) – is now on the market at offers over £880k.

It may appeal to a playful but private Bond villain keen on featureless front-facing stonework. Or tickle the fancy of some other entity with alternative aspirations for the Playfair-planned urban woodland overlooking Calton Hill and Greenside to the west.

Some observers say that planning consent for the site, maximising its value, is as advantageous to developer CSG Projects as realising RMA’s particular vision. What a cynical world we live in.

Meanwhile, a sub-lease on the top-floor 237m² office space next door – available until July 2028 and on the market for £129,611 per year – is under offer. The whole ‘Blenheim House’ block was acquired and refurbished by the Chris Stewart Group in 2016. Christopher Stewart himself has been a director of CSG Projects since 2010.

*To improve future process rather than reverse that decision, New Town & Broughton Community Council has complained about the PLRB to Edinburgh Council Customer Care.

Edinburgh beef with American beef

Filleted from the Edinburgh Evening Dispatch, 2 November 1897.—AM.

A correspondent, who is a member of the Butchers’ Association, but is himself in the wholesale trade, informs us that since the boycott was put in force* an enormous trade has been done by the American frozen meat agencies in Edinburgh, and that the bulk of the beef is disposed of to high-class butchers in the city, not one of whom professes to sell foreign meat.

He asserts that the beef is conveyed in a clandestine manner from the frozen meat depots to the butchers’ premises: that it is purchased wholesale at about 3½d. per lb., and retailed to their customers as the home-fed article at 10d. and 11d. per lb., a very handsome margin of profit, to say nothing of the imposition practised on the public.

Our correspondent states that in one week two frozen meat agencies in the city disposed of not less than 240 qrs. of beef, an amount far in excess of their sales prior to the introduction of the boycott. These high-class butchers formerly obtained their roasts from the co-operative stores, but as they are unable to do so now they have gone to the frozen meat depôts.

As affecting our correspondent personally, he states that while he formerly sold on an average about twenty bullocks a week to these butchers, it is with difficulty that he can now dispose of a fourth of that number.

*An informal campaign introduced that summer to protect UK farmers from ruinously cheap US beef. It was justified by trumped-up charges of parasitic trichinosis contamination.



Gaelic education no walk in the park

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Eideann is Lodainn) (CNPDE) campaigns on behalf of families across Edinburgh and the Lothians for the development of Gaelic Medium Education (GME).

In a written deputation to the Education, Children & Families Cmte in May, it noted: (1) the increased number of Class 1 applications (124) to Bun Sgoil Taobh na Pàirce for this Aug; (2) strengthened and additional GME staff at James Gillespie’s HS; (3) the Council’s potential strategic plans to grow GME in Edinburgh.



Given the likely increase in demand for GME, CNPDE asks ‘that such plans have educational benefit and certainty of pathway for pupils and staff at their heart and that they be driven by quality and education rather than viewing a solution as coming primarily from the perspective of buildings and estates.’

Spurtle reads this as wanting GME to be seen as a right requiring the necessary investment, not as an option offered only if and when (if ever) current capacity allows. We have some sympathy for that aspiration, but making it happen will depend on: (1) convincing those parents with alternative visions of how to prioritise limited educational resources; (2) fixing the fickle commitments of those politicians who control budgets.

In the meantime, Edinburgh Council learned last year that the Scottish Govt will not make the former Fettes Police HQ site available for a purpose-built GME high school.

Don’t pooh-pooh those who push for improvements

Back in Apr, Bellevue resident Shane Carter emailed Council staff asking for dog mess to be cleared from part of E Claremont St. Soon after, he received an automated reply saying the job had been done, only it hadn’t. This was not the first time Carter had received an inaccurate task-completion note from street-cleaning staff.

Dogged to the last, Carter reported this failed service and alleged ‘falsification’ and ‘malfeasance’ in emails to more or less senior Council officers and ward and community councillors.

On 7 May, the ‘Neighbourhood Environmental Services Manager – Street Care’ replied acknowledging a ‘breakdown in communication’ between the frontline Council team and its supervisor. He promised improved training and a review of automated reply wording. He denied any deliberate attempt by officers to falsify records and thanked Carter for enabling staff ‘to fully review our processes and practices and to make changes where required.’

Carter’s not impressed. ‘It is,’ he says, ‘a pity that the Council has to commit resources, in a climate of financial stringency, to training its staff to communicate purposefully: something that most us learned in childhood.’

It’s easy to deride so-called ‘serial complainers’. But within reason – as on this and related occasions – insistence upon delivering consistent minimum levels of public-service is surely right.

Briefly



A **Black Sheep Coffee** outlet will open soon at 4 Little King St (former premises of **Bross Bagels**). Edinburgh is already rammed with BSC cafés: 9 alternative locations to this including 1 on **George St**, 2 on **Princes St**, and another in faraway **St James Sq**.

Developer Ediston says building private-for-sale residential blocks opposite **Fettes Row** and **Royal Cres** will start this summer. Change-of-use planning applications for other elements of the site were expected to appear at the start of May but didn’t. The delay may reflect Council planners’ insistence on being provided with an additional **Environmental Impact Assessment** [bit.ly/NTQIF].

A branch of the worldwide **Oakberry Açaí** franchise is coming to **20 Leith St** (beside the underground car park access). Super-healthy Açaí berries, goes the corporate legend, are **handpicked by riverside communities** in the Amazon rainforest, much like other vegetable products sometimes harvested by **Bonnington locals** beside the Water of Leith.

After consulting local youth workers, **Leith Central Community Council** concludes that one of the biggest contributors to **anti-social behaviour** across the city is a lack of organised activities for young people on Sat nights. Young people themselves report an increase in the number of their peers **carrying knives**, and in attempts by organised crime to involve them in dealing drugs near or within schools. **LCCC** praises the work done by the **Pilmeyn Youth Development Project** and notes that many other parts of Edinburgh have no such provision. Unfortunately, funding is precarious.

Three locally based good causes hope your blue tokens donated in **Tesco** branches will win them funds of up to £1.5k. **W Granton Rd-based Empty Kitchens Full Hearts** turns surplus food into free meals, delivered without judgement across Edinburgh. **Leith Academy Breakfast Club** gives free breakfasts and healthy snacks to pupils living in poverty. **Albany St’s Rock Trust** offers 16–25-year olds facing homelessness a safe and welcoming place to get practical advice and emotional support. **Tesco** customers have until **30 June** to vote.

Between now and Mar 2026, 2,380 m² of **Mansfield Pl** and **Bellevue** carriageway will be resurfaced. New flagstones will be laid on 2,000 m² of **York Pl**, 450 m² of **Regent Rd** and 325 m² of **Rodney St**. Currently fifth in line to receive attention, **E London St** will remain available for open-cast mining until 2030/31.

Moreover ...



Amey plans to cut a mature elm's bus-dingin boughs overhanging the western boundary of Drummond CHS by lifting the crown to 8m and shaping all sides to ensure balance. In an alternative universe, it is bough-dingin buses that get trimmed.

The Council's 'Declaration of Acceptance of Office' for community council members – introduced at short notice without consultation after recent elections – has been scrapped following complaints about vague wording and excessive strictures. Those who refused to sign it on principle may now take up their positions, but CEC's Governance Manager hasn't said how. Brown Windsor soup: opaque and not as palatable as intended.

Dunard Centre CEO Jo Buckley says enabling work has ended. Balfour Beatty's finalised construction tender is expected this month. The last cost estimate – by Sir Robert MacAlpine, which has since withdrawn from Scottish projects – was £114m. Work should begin this summer and end in late 2028. Hod willing, operations will start in spring 2029. Buckley says the acoustically world-leading, intimate, 1,066-seat new venue is a 'once-in-a-century building worth taking time to get right'. For more on the subject, see our website on 3 June.

Edinburgh-based Morgan Architects have floated pre-application proposals to redevelop and partially rebuild 3 adjoining buildings between Thistle St and Queen St for owners and former occupiers the Royal London Group. With improved environmental credentials, 2 extra storeys on part of the site, and larger uninterrupted floorplates, the new complex could accommodate 800 staff. This would allow RLG to return its Scottish HQ here from Haymarket. It's an attractive alternative to yet more hotel use for the city centre. RLG also plans to convert to residential use its office behind the old tram cable depot façade in Henderson Row. More when we have it.

Inverleith Ter-based marketing agency The Union holds an annual Zag conference (for those who don't zig) celebrating unconventional ideas and approaches. This year's free, 3-hr event on 5 June explores beauty: its meaning, value (if any) and uses. Find out more at [bit.ly/ZagConf25].

The latest *Edinburgh by Numbers* (18th edition) is a treasure trove of statistics about the capital, 71.28% of them (by our calculation) questionable and 98.41% open to interpretation [bit.ly/LDLandS]. We are intrigued by the 'fact' that in 2023, 0.3% of the city's population (1,250 people) worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing. And disappointed that no figures appear for the many New Town shepherds whose 4x4s were among those climate activists targeted for tyre deflation in spring 2022 (Issues 316–17).

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