

Spurtle



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**October
2014**

No 234

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

BUSINESS AS USUAL, SAYS BURNS. ALL CHANGE, SAYS LAZAROWICZ

As Broughton, Edinburgh and the rest of Scotland took stock after the momentous Independence Referendum last month, Council Leader Andrew Burns promised continuity in the way the city will be run.

'We are in a unique position here in that we have a Labour-SNP coalition running the city,' he said on 19 September, 'something that will continue at least until the next local council elections in 2017.'

'We have successfully kept constitutional debate out of the Chambers for the first half of our term and there is absolutely no reason at all why that can't continue.'

'I can assure you that our focus will remain on running the city in the fairest and most efficient way possible and on keeping to the pledges set out in our Contract with the Capital two-and-a-half years ago' (*Breaking news*, 19.9.14; goo.gl/YGPgbE).

Meanwhile, Mark Lazarowicz MP has pledged himself to work in Parliament for the transfer of further powers to Holyrood, with legislation being drafted by January 2015. 'We now need to re-engage people to rebuild democracy throughout the UK by devolving power and Scotland is leading the way in that.' More at: [goo.gl/jPdyah].



James R. Faulkner's extraordinary mixture of rogue millinery, wind-up gramophone DJ-ing and self-taught taxidermy entertained visitors at last month's Stockfest on St Stephen Street (*Breaking news*, 21.9.14). We salute him.

STICKING UP FOR EDINBURGH'S EAST END

Edinburgh will embrace immense opportunities in developing its East End in coming years. But the equally immense challenges faced became clear at last month's New Town & Broughton Community Council.



CEC's City Centre Programme Manager Iain MacPhail outlined major projects for 3-8 and 42 St Andrew Square; the St James Quarter and Picardy Place; possible tramline extension to Leith; and 'Leith Walk' reinstatement south of Pilrig Street.

In general, CEC must find ways to coordinate these schemes to ensure that traffic flows and there's sufficient construction plant and labour available.

More specifically, TIAA Henderson has 'red-line' permission to bring forward proposals for Picardy Place as part of its wider St James Quarter project. CEC will collaboratively 'refine and finesse' these at an early stage before granting or refusing consent. It is keen that any new hotel in Picardy Place should not become an isolated island choking in fumes.

Spurtle notes that TIAAH wants to complete Picardy Place by the end of 2016, but by early last month had only met officials twice to discuss plans. Things are therefore likely to move very fast very soon.

We are concerned. Immense (often conflicting) pressures on time, expertise, manpower and civic prestige – plus the thinly veiled threat of international finance flouncing off in a huff – could easily result in bad decisions. We need strong political backing for officials in ensuring TIAAH progresses with a scheme and schedule which serve Edinburgh's long-term interests as well as those of investors.

LOCALS BLAST SILENCE AT St STEPHEN'S

City of Edinburgh Council silenced the 189-year-old clock bell at St Stephen's Church last month because it exceeds World Health Organisation guidelines on Community Noise.

Environmental Health investigated after complaints from four nearby properties, one about night-time noise. Two complaints were not recent.

The chimes were temporarily silenced while officials investigated whether: (a) CEC remains responsible for the mechanism; (b) the bell can be hushed or stopped at night.

Traditionalists were saddened and/or furious. All who contacted *Spurtle* claimed most locals love this intangible cultural asset. Some claimed new arrivals should have researched their surroundings in advance: *caveat emptor* (buyer beware). Others warned of an unwelcome precedent for historic bells elsewhere in the city, an assertion which CEC categorically denied soon after. Two people (with no personal involvement in the case) sympathised with the sleepless and backed CEC's response.

The official in charge says that even though WHO's 45dB (LAFmax) night-time limit was breached in only one property, CEC had a statutory duty to act. He also says, however, that 'Statutory Nuisance is not specifically defined in terms of noise levels, it is based on making judgement using the best available guidance', in this case the WHO guidelines.

It sounds as if CEC has some discretion in finalising a response. *Spurtle* hopes a reasonable compromise can be reached after wider consultation with the community. See *Breaking news* (4-5.9.14), *Letters* (3.9.14).



Briefly



Farewell, White Rabbit! The Broughton St retailer of erotic paraphernalia, **reading material** and novelty ping pong bats closed last month. Business partner **Heather Craig** will focus on a bun of her own.

Have you ever dreamt of owning your own **boutique hotel**? This or any other proposed use should be included with your bid for one of the **3 cast-iron police boxes** in Broughton up for sale. Closing date for offers to **CEC's Services for Communities Dept** is 8 Oct. See *Breaking news* (22.1.13).

Partial closure to traffic of George St (eastbound Charlotte Sq to Frederick St and westbound St Andrew Sq to Frederick St) has now commenced in earnest in a 12-month experiment to **increase pedestrian space and create a dedicated cycle lane**. CEC will conduct 100 on-street interviews a month to gauge opinions of users, locals, cyclists and drivers. At last month's NTBCC meeting, **CEC's Iain MacPhail** agreed that temporary structures erected here during the Festival had indeed resembled a **backyard at Dobbie's** (*Issue 233*), but promised a new and more uniform appearance would be achieved soon.

For no stated reason, on 2 Sept Tesco withdrew its planning application to install an ATM at **30-30A Dundas St** (*Breaking news*, 22.7.14, 29.7.14). Was this in response to calls for an improved **'heritage-style shop front'** (*Issue 233*) or because ATMs already exist outside **Margiotta's and the new café** opening at No.158 this month? The move came well before Tesco discovered a **£250m shortfall** in its finances and is unlikely to be connected.

CEC has approved proposals for a new **signalised crossing** at the junction of **London St and Drummond Pl**, and for a new pedestrian refuge on **Pilrig St at the end of Cambridge Ave**. CEC found insufficient need for improvements at the **McDonald Rd end of Bellevue Rd** by the school.

Can any reader identify the origin of **3 mysterious siren hoots** which sound at 8am on Sunday mornings somewhere near **Mansfield Place**? Locals suspect Drummond CHS, the Lothian Buses depot or McDonald Rd fire station, but so far all have been **too sleepy to check**.

Students to plug gap-site

S. Harrison Development Ltd has now applied to build accommodation for 226 students, and retail, café and restaurant uses at 34b Haddington Place (Ref. 14/03513/FUL). A very few (disabled) parking spaces will be available.

If consented, the proposal would bring student density in this area above the Council's recommended upper limit of 30%. But CEC's supplementary guidance says adjoining 'data zones' should also be taken into account when assessing likely impacts.

From what we have seen so far, *Spurtle* likes the plan (*Breaking news*, 9.9.14). Today's students are far more hard-working and quiet than they used to be, and those who aren't are better housed separately where they don't block accommodation which could be used by antisocial noisy families.



Green light for galling garage

Last-minute adjustments made to the dwelling/office/garage on East Scotland Street Lane seem to have been enough to satisfy City of Edinburgh Council's Planning Department that the structure should be allowed to remain.

A roller-door was installed in place of the original glass front, and the structure's height was reduced somewhat in the days before a CEC inspection on 8 September. Although the building is still 16cm too tall, officers said 'action to lower the building height further would not be commensurate with the breach'.

Officials conceded that they had failed to measure the building accurately at an earlier stage (despite neighbours pointing this out) and apologised for the mistake. But provided stone ingoos are put in by the time inspectors return later this month, planning consent will be granted.

Locals' outrage might have been avoided, one told us, if Planning had clarified at the outset that it could disregard the Enforcement order and the findings of the Reporter. There is no legal avenue to reverse the latest decision, she told us, and no member of staff will be reprimanded. She accuses CEC of opting for a quiet life, having wasted as yet untold sums of money in the process.

An alternative local voice suggested to *Spurtle* that '16cm is an acceptable compromise' for not adding a dwelling or office to this quiet Broughton cul-de-sac. However, he is one of a growing number disturbed by allegations that the garage is now being used for commercial purposes.

Meanwhile, here's a thought. *Spurtle* understands that the sink and shower inside the garage remain in place. There is nothing to prevent another application for change of use at some time in the future.

'Sickening' lane needs urgent attention

Local residents are appalled at the 'sickening' state of Broughton Street Lane and frustrated by officials' slow response in improving matters.

Commercial bins noisily filled and collected cause disturbance. The same bins – frequently overflowing – attract screeching gulls and four-footed vermin. What's more, the overall impression of shabby neglect seems to encourage other forms of anti-social behaviour. One neighbour observed, 'We are perceived as dirty people who don't care how we live.'

Outhouse's Kim Finlay fears that intimidating individuals who lurk at either end of the shadowy lane at night will deter his customers. There have been a number of assaults nearby of late, and Finlay wants improved lighting. Local residents also often witness drug-taking in the vicinity, but have had trouble getting the police at Gayfield Square to listen promptly to their concerns.

CEC officials have promised to label bins so that those misusing them can easily be identified. But no such labels have appeared despite repeated reminders and promises. Community Safety officers have undertaken to pay special attention to the lane, and may perhaps pursue ASBO proceedings against any drug taker who can be identified and named. They have also requested that the area be regularly monitored by City Centre police as part of their Matrix Patrols.

Ward 11's Councillor Joanna Mowat and Transport & Environment Convenor Councillor Lesley Hinds have been alerted to the problems and are now seeking regular updates on progress.



No kip for ex-cop Pak Polisi



A last word on the unblinking presence in Bellevue Crescent from flatmates Lisa and David. Our friend Bob was known as Pak (Mr) Polisi during his working life as a traffic policeman around the busy roads and roundabouts of Semarang, Central Java.

His stern, authoritative demeanour in all weathers very likely put a damper on reckless driving. When he and his cohort retired in the late 1990s they were replaced by a younger, more robust team made of concrete. Many of them still stand beside roundabouts and other 'dangerous' junctions across Indonesia.

Bob lived for a few years in Washington, DC, before making his home here in Edinburgh.

Since retiring he's had to cut right back on fried rice, Bintang beer and kreteks (clove cigarettes) to keep his svelte figure – now it's a bit of chicken satay and the occasional glass of Broughton Street Ale when he watches football.

He has quite a few friends here, including taxi drivers and traffic wardens. Bob says that the change of climate hasn't bothered him, but we often see him standing next to a radiator.

He is disappointed that he hasn't yet found a way to frighten the gulls (but perhaps retirement has made him a bit sedate for that).

A visit by *Aegithalos candatus*

More bird notes from Drummond Place's east quadrant ...

There has been another brief visitation by a flock of long-tailed tits, an event which usually happens in mid-September.

At least two dozen of these tiny titmice – which are mostly tail, and resident in the UK – converged on raspberry bushes, a whitebeam, elder trees and a sprawling photinia laden with vivid berries. For two days they flipped in and out of the trees, performed acrobatic twists and turns, emitting excited *zipping* sounds. All too soon, they vanished.



Photo: Tim Felce, Creative Commons [goo.gl/DzVxkM].

Were they feeding on transitory insects (their principal food) or perhaps drawn in some way to the red berries? Do they journey from garden to garden in the autumn? And where do they settle, if at all, for the winter? These are the tantalising queries these merry little birds leave in their wake. *JRM*

Peace in our time

Blissful silence was restored to the junction of Pilrig Street and Rosslyn Crescent last month after weeks of disturbance.

A shooglie Scottish Water manhole cover had been entertaining nearby residents day and night with loud and monotonous clanking under the impact of passing vehicles. Some sleepless guests at a nearby hotel were so entertained that they checked out early.

Resolving the problem was complicated by CEC's concerns over traffic management issues, but Scottish Water was eventually coaxed into action by persistent nagging from locals, and, we understand, the possible intervention of one or more Leith Walk councillors.

We'd like to pick a pocket or two

Many *Spurtle* readers have no time to get involved with their free independent stirrer but would still like it to continue flourishing. Here's how they can help.

Annual subscriptions provide us with a dependable lump sum which we can use if ever advertising goes quiet or we meet unexpected expenses. It also keeps us in touch with a group of core supporters to whom we can turn for news, support and advice. Thank you to all those who backed us like this last year.

A subscription ensures delivery of 11 issues per year to local doors, and costs £15 (or whatever you can afford). Delivery further afield by 2nd-class post costs £21.

New payments should be made by cheque to: *Spurtle*, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ. Please remember to include the desired delivery address.

Briefly



Welcome, **Golden Hare Books!** The new independent at 68 St Stephen St stocks a **small but intriguing selection** on: architecture & design, art & photography, **biography & memoirs**, classic & contemporary fiction for children and adults, culture & criticism, **gastronomy**, graphic literature, history, politics & **philosophy**, and travel writing. The shop is 'dedicated not just to the love of reading, but also to the book as **beautiful, life-enriching** object of desire in its own right'. For more see: [goo.gl/ngX8tB].

Five new flats are proposed for **7-8 Baxter's Pl.** Across the road at **9a Antigua St**, the Gurkha Brigade – home of delicious Nepalese cuisine – may soon expand at the rear (Refs 14/03702/14; 14/03714/FUL; *Breaking news*, 23.9.14).

Simon Green will talk on Scottish architect **Robert Lorimer's work** in England and further afield at the **Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland's** next meeting in St Andrew & St George's West Church (**13 George St**) at 6.30pm on Mon 6 Oct. Tickets £5 (students £2.50).

Expect **disruption around Waverley Bridge** between now and mid-Dec as footways are widened, crossing points **improved**, and new street lights installed. The changes should **make it a lot simpler** to reach a station one can no longer easily get in or out of.

Developer **People for Places (Shrubhill) Ltd** will present outline pre-application plans for the gap-site **between Dryden St and Shrub Place** on 21 Oct and 11 Nov (3-7pm) at **McDonald Rd Library**. See *Breaking news* (10.9.14).

Mansfield Pl's HIV and Hepatitis C charity **Waverley Care** seeks nominations in Bank of Scotland's Community Award for a **new DIY/gardening outhouse**. Vote at: [goo.gl/GveMzw], or text Vote HJZ to 82332, or tweet #commfund HJZ

A **new choir for 'kinship carers'** has begun on Tuesday mornings at **St Andrew's and St George's West Church** on George St. Organised by charity **Circle** and run by **Sing in the City's** Kirsty Baird, it's free and offers fun and relaxation for those who look after children in their family where a parent is unable to do so. See *Breaking news* (4.9.14).

Moreover ...

Locally based souped-up ceilidh band **Whisky Kiss** released their second single and video on 8 Sept. **'Be Long Here'** addresses inclusive national identities with grit and wit and rhythmic energy, and received **nearly 200,000 hits** in its first 2 days as a result. Watch for free at: [goo.gl/kVKKV1].

Tired of arguing? **Exhausted by great national events** playing out on your doorstep? Escape with the Broughton History Society at 7pm in Drummond CHS. **Mark Nixon** will talk on 'Political Agitation in Scotland, 1884'.

Leith Central Community Council has learned that a temporary 'Flexi-Team' of **plain-clothes police officers** drafted in from national level is focusing on **violence and anti-social behaviour** in parts of Broughton. Street-drinkers in **Hopetoun Cres** and drug use/paraphernalia in **Pilrig Park** are getting special attention. Where possible, they're also tackling 'legal highs' sold in shops along **Leith Walk**.

Reconstruction of the **Botanic Cottage** in the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh began on 8 Sep. **Work is expected to take a year**. Regius Keeper Simon Milne MBE described this as 'a major milestone in one of the **most inspirational heritage projects** happening anywhere in the country right now, and a building which will become a **thriving hub** for learning and engagement with the world of plants'. A short film on this summer's **turf-cutting ceremony** – in which many local faces appear – is viewable here: [goo.gl/5thfR1].

Independence referendum voting figures for Edinburgh sorted by **Westminster constituency** show that more people in Edinburgh North & Leith voted than anywhere else in Edinburgh (72,181). **Of these, 40% voted Yes and 60% No**. The margin was narrowest in **Edinburgh East** (47%Y: 53%N) and greatest in **Edinburgh South** (35%Y: 65%N). See [goo.gl/Bd1nyv].

Quakers have arrived at Broughton St Mary's Parish Church. They now meet in the Drummond Room overlooking the garden at 7pm on the 4th Sunday of the month. All are welcome 'for quiet and friendship'.

A new **Water of Leith Bistro and Café** has replaced the Ristorante Luigi's on **Howard Place**. It is all part of the lively trade in feeding and watering an estimated **3,000+ office workers** in the immediate vicinity.

Were you to join the **Central Edinburgh Book Group** on 14 October at 6.30pm in McDonald Road Library you would find them focused upon **The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty** by Sebastian Barry.

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Alison Johnstone MSP for Lothian Region



On the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month during term time I hold a surgery for Lothian residents at the Scottish Parliament between 11am and 1pm.

Please call to book a surgery appointment or to arrange another time and venue that is convenient for you.

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Friday advice sessions:
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New Town/Broughton Community Council

THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL
REPRESENTS THE VIEWS
OF LOCAL RESIDENTS TO
EDINBURGH CITY COUNCIL

Next Meetings:

13 October
& 10 November
at 7.30pm

**Broughton St Mary's Parish
Church, Bellevue Crescent**

www.ntbcc.org.uk/contact/

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