

# Spurttle



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**December  
2019**

**No 291**

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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free**

## TOP OFFICIAL DEFENDS OFFICIALS OVER CHRISTMAS MARKET

A report by the Council's Chief Executive Andrew Kerr has concluded that, for the most part, officials and elected members responded correctly to time-related challenges in the run-up to this year's Christmas Market [bit.ly/2QK9th7]. The scaffold structure and temporary village in East Princes Street Gardens has been built without planning permission.

The report states that the 2019-20 event and all previous ones have been scrupulously examined to ensure public safety.

It acknowledges that mistakes were made by CEC services, but finds no evidence of systemic failure. This despite last year's event also having no planning permission [bit.ly/2D9nRal] and no previous event having a Building Warrant.

It says that extension of the contract and expansion of the Market south of the railway lines were both appropriately dealt with under the Council's Scheme of Delegation. However, it finds the Executive Director of Place should have contacted all ward councillors once the scale of the Market became clear, but *didn't*.

The Policy & Sustainability Cmte considered the report and questioned officials on 26 November [bit.ly/2QSzXlb]. Members asked for more clarity on what actions could be taken over procedural faults; suggested future politically controversial decisions be made by committee; asked how CEC ignored its own rules, and why information was not shared equally.

The Chief Executive will submit a second report to the P&S Cmte on 25 February outlining revised governance arrangements for event planning.

## HEELIEGOLEERIE



**Are you ever so slightly trauchled? Have global melt-downs, national politics, and various forms of festive bliss left you pouskered and forfauchlet? You are not alone. We suggest one solution is to visit The Torrance Gallery on Dundas Street, where Ingrid Nilsson's *Doebe Profile* is among many works by local artists exhibiting until 4 January. You will feel de-raivelled soon.**

## PARKING POSES PROBLEMS

New Town & Broughton Community Council has doubts about draft Traffic Regulation Orders in the North and East of the city, issued under the Council's Parking Action Plan. CEC in part seeks to end the unfairness of residents paying for spaces when there aren't enough to go round [bit.ly/2rr2K0A].



NTBCC doesn't mind increased tariffs, or shared-use parking and visitor permits. But it says increasing the number of spaces will encourage private vehicle use, contrary to Council policy, with likely ill effects on road safety, air quality, and bin collections. It suggests parking provision in central areas should stay the same or reduce.

Meanwhile, having pressed for the introduction of a Controlled Parking Zone in its area, Leith Central Community Council is now pushing to defend myriad light-industrial backstreet businesses across Leith. Some face disruption or ruin if new yellow lines are badly positioned, or if inconsiderate drivers block entrances in search of free spaces.

## BELLEVUE'S NEW GOVERNOR

Locals queried the unannounced and unexplained appearance in November of a raised platform plus associated poles and box at the centre of Bellevue Crescent.

Was it, they wondered, a kind of Speakers' Corner arrangement for notoriously opinionated Broughton residents? Or a new Ross Bandstand community outstation? Perhaps a helipad for visiting oligarchs?

In fact, it's Scottish Gas Network's above-ground vent stack, cabinet, and lid for a new underground gas governor as part of the St James Centre Project. Frankly, *Spurttle* doesn't understand the plans, other than something important is buried underground and, as with omelettes, 'the use of pneumatic rammers to consolidate the backfill is not recommended' (Ref. 19/04527/FUL).

The whole shebang, including its effect on the setting of nearby Category A-listed buildings and the Conservation Area, will be decided by delegated authority unless over 20 people object. The deadline for comments is 13 December.



## WOOING TO WIN

Locals gathered in Broughton St Mary's Parish Church on 28 November to ask questions of and gauge answers from five candidates for the Edinburgh North & Leith constituency in the Westminster General Election.

Deidre Brock (SNP), Steve Burgess (Green), Iain McGill (Conservative), Gordon Munro (Lab & Co-op), and Bruce Wilson (Lib-Dem) faced the music. Heather Astbury (Renew) and Robert Speirs (The Brexit Party) did not attend.

'Jaundiced of Claremont' harrumphed audibly during the proceedings and chewed wasps afterwards in print (our website, *Breaking news*, 29.11.19).

The last time we had this much fun (2017), Brock won with 19,243 votes (34%), Munro came second with 17,618 (31.2%), and McGill third with 15,385 (27.2%). The turnout was 71.2%. This year's election will be held on 12 December.

## Briefly



**Meal Makers** are trying to crowdfund £7.5k to help lonely or isolated older people across Scotland with **food and friendship**. Those donating can claim a range of gifts and experiences (availability may change), including: a family ticket for the **Camera Obscura**; and a signed photo of Lorraine Kelly along with **her own recipe for Dundee cake**. Make your offer by 12.18pm on 13 Dec at [bit.ly/2qytpIO]. Meal Makers are part of the charity **Food Train**.

Broughton History Society's next lecture will be in **Drummond CHS** at 7pm on 13 Jan when Ian Hooper talks about **'Creating the Museum of Scotland'**. Bring your own Prince Albert.

**Dear Readers**, once a year we ask those of you can afford it to please put a penny in the *Spurtle's* hat. **Annual subscriptions cost £15** for goodwill gestures and a copy hand-delivered locally; **£22 secures an invisible halo** and out-of-catchment copies by post. **Other sums of all sizes are also welcome**. To cut a long story short, these contributions help tide us over **short-term cash-flow squalls**, and keep HMS *Stirrer* on an even keel throughout the year. Details of how to subscribe can be found here: [bit.ly/35dzLfu]. Don't forget to include your address. **Thank you!**

There will be late-night shopping on **Broughton St** from 5–8pm on Fri 6 Dec. Expect unique offers, discounts, seasonal fun, and Christmas snacks. **Shop local!**

The Council has secured funds to carry out a feasibility study for converting the railway line between **Powderhall and Meadowbank** to pedestrian/cyclist use. A consultant will start work in the New Year.

Begun at Scotland Yard in 1986, **The Yard** charity currently runs adventure-play services for disabled children, young people, and their families at various venues in the East of Scotland. Thanks to **Tesco's Centenary Bags of Help** scheme, the Yard now anticipates an additional grant worth thousands of pounds. How much exactly depends on shoppers' votes. You can cast your blue tokens in the Yard's favour at **Broughton Rd Tesco** until 31 Dec.

In Spring 2020, some **168 Just Eat e-bikes** will be available for public hire across Edinburgh. Life in the city may still be an **uphill grind**, but it will feel flatter by e-bike with almost effortless battery-assisted speeds of up to 15mph.

## Home owners who share must care

Euan Leitch, Director of Built Environment Scotland, spoke to Leith Central Community Council in November about the Scottish Government's thoughts on maintaining buildings in multiple ownership such as tenements, tower blocks, and subdivided villas.

A cross-party working group at Holyrood, first set up by Ben Macpherson MSP, has been taking advice from expert stakeholders and has now established in principle some compulsory arrangements for 'shared buildings'.

(1) Creation of formally established ownership associations. (2) Maintenance 'sinking funds' with annual contributions linked to properties not individuals. (3) Independent 5-yearly inspections with recommendations, costings, and records of work carried out.

At present these are outline arrangements representing a 'direction of travel' with no likely arrival point any time soon. Much detail still needs thrashed out, not least concerning insurance, size of annual contributions, short-term lets, tenants' position, and how local authorities could be funded to oversee the scheme.

Critics deplore the proposals as unnecessary over-regulation, and point to help already available from Edinburgh Council at [bit.ly/2OagCW1]. But the subject definitely has MSPs' attention, and Leitch recommends contacting elected members with your observations. For general advice, see Under One Roof at [bit.ly/2ra72cA].



## Tourism – time for a break?

The Edinburgh Tourism Strategy Implementation Group's public consultation on its draft Tourism Strategy 2030 was extended into mid-December amid mixed reviews.

At face value, there were points to welcome, particularly an emphasis on reducing negative impacts of tourism on residents, and maximising positive ones.

Residents should be consulted on tourism, communicated with about tackling nuisances, and encouraged to engage in cultural activities.

There should be collaboration to 'ensure the right conditions for a thriving, responsible, sustainable economy'. Here, fair work practices and socially responsible policies should be central. Edinburgh's existing regulations for place management and property uses should be enforced and upgraded if necessary for the benefit of locals and visitors.

Sceptics found any mention of consultation pretty rich given how late and how little the public had been invited to contribute so far to this industry-led exercise in wishful thinking.

They noted that this was a plan 'to manage tourism *growth*' (our italics), spread that growth around additional parts of Edinburgh and Scotland, and do so at formerly 'quiet periods' of year.

They questioned whether integrating tourism 'decision making and implementation' would in effect put octopuses in charge of a fish tank.

They wondered how worthwhile a 'sustainable' Edinburgh economy would be if fuelled by worldwide aviation transport.

Some suggested better regulation was easier said than done, particularly without clear support from Holyrood and a genuine increase in Edinburgh's block funding. In any case, all these issues are complicated by widespread public lack of confidence in the competence, judgement, or willingness to follow due process of senior officials and some elected members within Waverley Court and City Chambers. Perhaps it is unsurprising, then, that radical sceptics are becoming more strident about the need for managed and sustainable 'de-growth' of the capital's tourism sector, not least in response to what the Scottish Government acknowledges is a climate crisis. A final draft strategy will now be elaborated behind closed doors. That document will eventually be adjusted or endorsed by the Council following its launch in Feb. 2020. Doubters ask how it will be implemented and by whom.



## Developer has room to hope

Back in July, we reported refusal of planning permission for an application to build six 1-bedroom apartments behind Claremont Crescent (Issue 286).

An appeal to the Scottish Government by the developer Malcolm Macpherson was dismissed on 12 November (PPA-230-2285). The Reporter found that while the principle of housing development here is fine, the details in this case did not comply with key Local Development Plan policies on design, historic environment, and trees. The proposals would also have had a detrimental impact on the setting of nearby listed buildings and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

We expect the developer to return with a new proposition in due course, and are curious to see if it will elicit the same remarkable level of public support from people living elsewhere but sharing an office.

## Edinburgh on high: a little singing bird'

It is perhaps not widely known that the great Irish poet William Butler Yeats was a fervent admirer of Phoebe Anna Traquair and of her astonishing murals in what is now the Mansfield Traquair Centre.

During a sojourn in Scotland in 1906 he visited the then Catholic Apostolic Church and was enthralled. Writing to his friend and confidante Lady Gregory, he enthused:

*Nearly all of my time in Edinburgh was absorbed in Mrs Traquair's work and I find it far more beautiful than I had foreseen – one can only judge of it when one sees it in a great mass, for only then does one get any idea of her extraordinary abundance of imagination ... I have come from her work overwhelmed, astonished, as I used to come long ago from Blake, and from him alone ...*

Yeats also referred to Traquair as 'a little singing bird', whom he presumably met while in Edinburgh.

Traquair was born Phoebe Anna Moss in Dublin in 1852 and raised in County Wicklow in S.E. Ireland. She married the Scottish palaeontologist Ramsay Traquair in Edinburgh in 1873, and remained here until her death in 1936. She was buried in Colinton Parish Church graveyard, the plot marked with a headstone designed by herself.

Her Irish identity remained strong, however. A recent Irish visitor to the Mansfield Traquair Centre observed that the background landscape in the famous panel depicting the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins is 'unmistakeably the hills of Wicklow, and who in Ireland will fail to recognise the sugar loaf mountain?' [bit.ly/2OaT9UW] [bit.ly/2O6RYWg]—JRM



## Lost history reclaimed by Friends

If you haven't visited Warriston Cemetery recently, go and have another look. You'll be surprised at how much has changed for the better.

Opened in 1843 to a design by the architect David Cousin, this 14-acre Category A-listed space was the first of Edinburgh's garden cemeteries – a typically Victorian mix of vision and pragmatism in response to the capital's (literally) overflowing city-centre burying grounds.

On a south-facing slope leading down to the Water of Leith, the cemetery's meandering paths led visitors between trees and memorials, a testament to the wonders of Creation and to Edinburgh's wealth, achievement, and piety.

Combining recreation and edification, Warriston attracted many extraordinary headstones, some ornately carved, others inscribed with fascinating biographical details, boasts, religious and coded atheistic sentiments. There are stories here of battles won and children lost, careers forged, fortunes made, undying love, suffering borne with fortitude. It makes for addictive reading at all times of year.

The site had fallen into serious neglect by the 1980s, and not even its compulsory purchase by the Council could hold back the smothering entanglements of vegetation. Headstones that didn't succumb to ivy all too often fell victim to vandals. Surprising things happened in bushes.

Happily, though, that spiral of decline has been significantly reversed over the last six years by a Friends group. Working in cooperation with Council staff, members – some local, others from across the city – meet twice weekly to reclaim, maintain, record, and improve this quietly beautiful space on Broughton's doorstep.

You can find out more about their activities and occasional guided tours on the Friends of Warriston Cemetery website here [bit.ly/37DfZw6].—AM

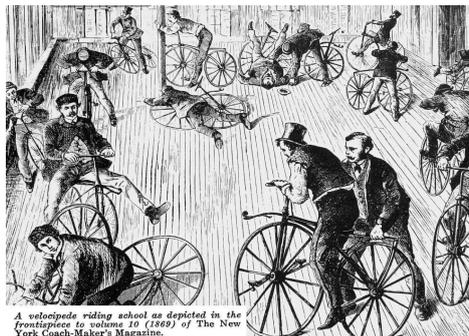


## Long history of two-wheeled Broughtonians

The introduction of local 'Just Eat' rental bike racks may tempt some who have never cycled, or not been on a bicycle since their childhood, to consider using this environmentally friendly form of transport. But, as far as we know, no one is offering riding lessons.

However, in April 1869, the coach-building firm of Munro in Broughton Market advertised in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* that it had purchased Parisian Velocipedes and was offering 'Velocipede practice taught daily from 5pm to 10pm. Saturdays 2pm to 10pm. 2s. per hour. Visitors 6d each.' No doubt the fun of seeing learners fall off was worth sixpence to visitors.

Although the first mechanically propelled two-wheel vehicle is claimed to have been built in 1839 by the Scottish blacksmith Kirkpatrick Macmillan, it was the French Velocipede, invented in the mid-1860s, that popularised cycling.—Barclay Price



A velocipede riding school as depicted in the frontispiece to volume 10 (1869) of The New York Coach-Maker's Magazine.

## Briefly



The internationally acclaimed Stockbridge-based artist **Joanna Kessel's** work celebrates the often unrecognised minutiae of urban settings. 'It is inspired by the intrinsic beauty that can lie hidden where **colours, textures, marks and material qualities** meet – at thresholds, on walls and in corners and reveals.' An exhibition of her collages in mosaic, glass, and concrete is now running at Le Roi Fou on **Forth St** until 26 Jan.

Police will pay particular attention to **Leith Walk** over the Festive Season. They aim to nip booze-fuelled violence in the bud, prevent and stop drink driving, check taxi licences and condition of vehicles.

A recent flurry of activity in **King George V Park** has followed the loss of its coveted Green Flag status. The latest report by **Keep Scotland Beautiful** highlighted problems with overgrown shrubs, litter, the ground surface near **Logan St**, and close encounters of the turd kind. One **grizzled observer** suggests that re-pointing of setts and re-tarmacking of paths, though imperfect, may have blown the Council's **Parks budget** for the rest of the year.

**The Quaich Project** consulted on detailed pre-application proposals for **W Princes St Gdns** in Nov. We added out tuppenceworth here: [bit.ly/2QHyHwB].

Repeated damage to an A-listed property at **31 Broughton St** (Issue 270) has helped prompt a proposal to restrict the **height, weight, and direction of travel** of vehicles using Broughton St Lane. The **Transport & Environment Cmte** will consider the change on 5 Dec.

Underbelly's Charlie Wood and Ed Bartlam, controversial promoters of **Edinburgh's Winter Festivals**, made much of the events' social-media reach when presenting to the **Culture & Communities Cmte** last month (bit.ly/33jvXbo Item 7a). They boasted of 5M hits for last year's Edinburgh's Christmas website. They were less effusive about last month's winter storm of criticism concerning the scaffold 'sky-deck' in **E Princes St Gdns**. This they described as 'recent, localised press focus'.

The Chapter House Singers will perform at **Broughton St Mary's PC** on 14 Dec. The event is described, perhaps by one **striking a dissenting note**, as 'an informal concert of Christmas music, from beautiful to slightly bonkers'. There will be carols. More at: [bit.ly/2OuYrJO].

# Moreover ...

Police will advise about 'Keeping Safe at Christmas' at a pop-in session from 1-3pm on 9 Dec in the Out of the Blue Drill Hall, Dalmeny St. Please pop carefully.

The application for new improved signage outside **Broughton St Mary's Parish Church** has been approved. Following coverage in Issue 290, the **Rev Peter Macdonald** assures us, 'I am pleased to report that on receiving planning permission all wording was proof read before manufacture. **Pedants and prodigals** always welcome at the Church of Scotland!' Proofread.

In the same way that we admire **crocodiles**, so here at the *Spurtle* we revere members of the legal profession: from **as safe a distance as possible**. We shall therefore tread very lightly around the conclusion in Nov of **Wildcat Haven Enterprises CIC's** defamation case against **Andy Wightman** in the Court of Session. Suffice it to say, Mr Wightman, an MSP for Lothian, hopes to be assolzied early in 2020.

In November, a new effort was made by locals to reduce food waste, one of the main origins of greenhouse gases. The '**Leith's Good with Food**' campaign seeks to reduce food waste by 60%, using free kits containing tools, easily implemented tips, recipes, and a kitchen caddy for scraps. The contents of a single caddy can be converted at Edinburgh's state-of-the-art **Millerhill plant** into enough power to run a TV for 5 hours – simultaneously, a positive contribution to reducing climate change and excellent evidence for the rubbish-in rubbish-out school of **broadcasting-generated** irritation and despair. The project is modelled on the 2018 'Flyspotting' campaign, which halved **flytipping in 10 streets around Dalmeny St Park** through a mixture of portraits, messaging, and literary appropriation by local Leithers [bit.ly/333PsV9]. The initiative is part of a Zero Waste Leith project run by environmental charity **Changeworks** ('delivering solutions for low-carbon living') and community-based partners.

If you had to predict where Leith's next **major residential development** will be, what would you say? Canny locals are already carefully monitoring underused, vacant, and publicly owned properties between **Gordon/Manderston Sts** and the former tram depot on Leith Walk. **Watch these spaces.**

This is the **last printed Spurtle** of 2019 and the first of 2020. We wish all our readers, subscribers, advertisers, friends, contributors, anonymous sources, and interested others a **very Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and all-round jolly holiday**. Online coverage will continue as usual until the paper returns to the streets in Feb.

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### LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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



Participate in local democracy.

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

Next meeting: 7pm on Mon. 20 January, McDonald Road Library.

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH US



Sunday 15th December

- 10.30am - Christmas Celebration Service
- 6pm - Carol Service

Thursday 19th December

- 8pm - Carol Service

[www.bellevuechapel.org](http://www.bellevuechapel.org)

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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  
Pilton Drive North  
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NEW TOWN & BROUGHTON  
COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Representing locals' views to City of Edinburgh Council.

You're very welcome to attend.

Come along and make a difference. Next meetings:  
**9 December and 13 January**  
at 7.30pm in

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

[www.ntbcc.org.uk](http://www.ntbcc.org.uk)