

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

**May
2026**

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SHORT-TERM-LET LAW NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE

A legal loophole is undermining Edinburgh's short-term-let (STL) regulations. To open a legitimate secondary STL, applicants need planning permission and a licence to trade. However, the law is being interpreted to allow a licence and trading while a planning application awaits a decision or a planning appeal is in progress.

With no apparent limit to how many STL planning applications can be made and withdrawn for the same property, some operators now continue to trade even when planning permission has already been refused by the Council and the Scottish Govt on appeal. Council 'decline to determine' responses (Issue 360) can be circumvented if applicants make slight variations each time. 'It is a consequence of sloppy legislative drafting and lack of real-world experience,' says Cllr Mowat (Ward 11). 'This may be understandable at the drafting stage, but once the law is being used I would hope that there would be recognition of these concerns.'

Frustrated councillors have already written twice to the Scottish Govt (seeking changes to 'Mandatory Licensing Condition 13'), but ministers have not actively engaged with the problem or committed to review the law. Fresh approaches will be made after the May elections.

'Ultimately, residents and applicants need clarity that can only come from parliamentarians,' says Cllr Caldwell (Ward 12). 'It's bitterly disappointing to see sensible regulations repeatedly undermined, but, until there's a fix, I'd respectfully plead with residents and operators to continue engaging with the processes.'

Spurtle understands the Council has some cases out on appeal which may provide further clarity. Meanwhile, for ordinary residents (particularly those living near disruptive STLs), this cynical gaming of the system shows infuriating contempt for the public will and wastes both Council time and money.



SPURTLESHIRE STARS IN VICTORIAN DRAMA



Apple TV returned to the New Town last month to film scenes for Season 3 of its hit period drama *The Buccaneers*. The Council approved road closures for Circus Ln, Royal Circus, St Vincent and Cumberland Sts, with production taking over local shops over several days. Inspired by Edith Wharton's unfinished novel of the same name, the story follows wealthy American women attempting to infiltrate high-society Victorian London. No release date has been announced yet for the upcoming social season, but we understand it will be in early 2027. For more details and photos, see our website 27.4.26. See also Issue 334.

—Hannah Muir

TOGETHER APART ALL OVER THE PLACE

If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck. Unless it's a flock of short-term lets.

(1) Bluemarsh Ltd seeks planning consent to convert A-listed 39 London St into 7 apartments across 3 storeys for 14 guests (26/01011/LBC).

A staff member would be on-site 24/7, with sleeping accommodation in an additional suite. Bluemarsh says this addresses reasons for refusal of a similar application in 2020. There would be emergency-only access to shared back greens.

Since No. 39's last use was as a Funeral Parlour/Directors in 2011, the new proposal would not involve loss of housing. New Town & Broughton Community Council is sounding local opinion about the plans but provisionally concludes that they're 'more sensible' than previous iterations. A Planning determination is expected by 12 May.

(2) Thistle Residential proposes converting the existing groundfloor La Novia shop at 6 York Buildings on Queen St into 3 apart-hotel units. Access would be via the existing 12-unit apart-hotel at 2 York Buildings under the same owner.

(3) Tri Scotland Ltd wants to convert office space at 125 McDonald Rd into 14 one-bdrm serviced apartments with parking for 9 cars and 4 bikes (26/00794/FUL-STL). Rooms vary in size from 36–47m².

(4) Some 74 locals objected to plans for an apart-hotel on Forth St (Issue 360). We understand Historic Environment Scotland has concerns about proposed changes inside the properties.



Briefly



Demolition has begun at **27 and 29 Beaverhall Rd**, making space for commercial units and 205 homes, 25% of which will have 'affordable' rents. Before long, nothing but crumbs will remain of the former **Duncan's Chocolate Factory** (active 1896–1991, home of the Walnut Whip) or its once astonishingly colourful 'Egyptian' mural.

In Issue 355 we reported problems residents in 65 flats at **81–91 E London St** had experienced with anti-social behaviour in, and uninvited occupation of, the private car park behind their homes. They now have permission to erect a 7ft-high security gate to **keep out troublemakers** (26/04951/FUL). One resident objected that the gate was entirely unnecessary and would itself cause **unwelcome disturbance** day and night.

As well as reviewing loading arrangements for delivery vehicles on **Leith Walk** and **Constitution St**, with a view to possible new bays on side streets (Issue 360), officers will now look at servicing for **Antigua** and **Union Sts**.

Leith Central Community Council reports that, subject to availability of lifting equipment, 4 rusty and neglected planters will be removed from **Iona St** and 6 from **Leith Walk**. On **Balfour and Brunswick Sts**, 3 attractively oxidised planters tended by loving locals will remain.

A free exhibition, *Earth Matters*, has opened in the **Inverleith House Gallery** at the Botanics. Over 30 artists dig into the 'brilliance, beauty and fragility' of soil. It appeals particularly, but not exclusively, to those who like variations of brown.

The Celadon 2U business and (9+ years') lease at **52 Rodney St** are available for a premium of £42k and yearly rent of £15k.

Since **stair-cleaning services** for approx 3k social-housing blocks were contracted out to the private sector last year, many residents have complained about **non-existent or unsatisfactory service**. At a recent full Council meeting, **Cllr McFarlane** (Ward 11) called for clarification of: how many **complaints** have been made; what **penalties** there are for failing contractors; how officers monitor **quality control**; what options exist for **'in-housing'** residential stair cleaning. His motion was met with **cross-party applause and approval**.

Congratulations to the **Edinburgh Minute**, shortlisted (top 5 of 960 entries) as **Best Regional / Local Brand Newsletter in the World** for the International Media Assoc's Global Media Awards on 7 May. **Michael Macleod** launched *EM* in 2022, and it now boasts over 30k subscribers. The *Spurtle* is one of **several local publications** benefiting from the site's mix of original journalism, **news aggregation** and no-nonsense meteorology.

Hopefuls at the hustings – how they fared

Six candidates appeared at *Spurtle's* hustings on 16 Apr (summary/video link at [bit.ly/SpHstngs](#)). Jaundiced of Claremont assessed highs and lows for each. (RA: round of applause. AG: audience grows.)



Ben Macpherson (SNP): Highly experienced at local, national and ministerial levels, committed, exuded competence. Some like quiet delivery, some want more oomph. Inexplicably mystified by the timing bell. (RA: ruinous Brexit; pro-Powderhall–Meadowbank active-travel route.)

Jo Mowat (Con): Confident and authoritative on Edinburgh-specific issues; clear on importance of economy, balancing books, improving literacy. Did not establish clear-blue water between Cons and Reform on all issues. (RA: bring back synthetic phonics. AG: public-sector cuts.)

Gary Neill (Reform): Personable, calm, not swivel-eyed, pro-students and sustainable tourism. Salesman's fluency but very short on policy detail; alienated much of audience over alleged equivalence of abortion and assisted dying. (AG: abortion/assisted dying.)

Kate Nevens (Grn): Enthusiastic, in command of brief, popular with audience but sometimes overbubbled at rolling boil. Swallowed mic instead of speaking into it. (RA: Universal Basic Income; pro-public ownership of buses; education as social good; pro-thoughtful/productive debate in Holyrood; rewinding. AG: ethnic cleansing in Gaza.)

Liss Owen (Lib-Dem): Impressive on homelessness, domestic/international context for cost-of-living crisis, professional experience in teaching, admirably concise. Lost train of thought but sensibly stopped talking and waited for the next one. (RA: education reduces inequality; pro-Grn policy on blood-testing.)

Oliver Thomas (Lab): Thoughtful, articulate, likeable, strong on NHS issues. Appeared independently minded but then awkwardly toed party line re biological women-only spaces with face like angst-ridden beetroot. (RA: nuanced view on assisted dying; pro-Grn policy on blood-testing. AG: women-only spaces.)

Slap art by numbers

Last month, dozens of serial MONAK stickers appeared on lampposts across Broughton, Leith and the city centre. Apart from the number, they're identical and difficult to peel off.

Monak is a generic term for 'slap culture', with individual examples meaning everything or nothing depending on context. The aim is to spread a printed meme/brand on a wider scale than is possible for localised adolescent taggers. Some street artists criticise this as the least interesting and authentic kind of graffiti.

The blue and yellow stickers here are part of an anonymous project found also in London, Leeds, Sunderland and Glasgow. The stylised camera is an invitation to document and share the campaign's geographical reach.



One online source attributes this example to a Durham-based muralist. *Spurtle* has unsuccessfully approached that person for comment.

Council backs coach-friendly capital

The Transport & Environment Cmte agreed last month to progress pay-&-display parking for coaches (10 hours per day max) on the N side of Regent Rd and Carlton Ter Brae at a rate of £9.80 per hour. Officers will now start work on a Transport Regulation Order to make this happen.

The changes are a small part of Edinburgh Council's evolving plan to enhance routes and parking/drop-off points for coaches across the city and mitigate their negative effects.

New Town & Broughton Community Council raised misgivings about proposals at this location, including:

- Insufficient enforcement of rules to ban idling engines. (NTBCC sees little evidence of e-coaches in the area.)
- Potential impact of extended parking on Carlton Ter Brae bus stop users.
- No consideration of safety implications of more coaches using roundabout beside St Andrew's House.
- Not enough space for more pedestrians and wheelers on narrow N-side footway.
- Need for more (and unobstructive) litter bins.



Book lover first in the queue



Larry Hutchison has been visiting the Christian Aid Book Sale at St Andrew's & St George's since the early 1970s, writes *Julia Forsyth*, one of the event's organisers. He has never missed a year since and is usually the first in the queue.

Larry always makes a beeline for 'the Specials', on a table in what is today's New Town Church on George St. This is where curated rare and valuable items are displayed – books and ephemera which often have a story to tell, or a connection to Scotland or Edinburgh's literary past. But this avid collector has made many remarkable discoveries elsewhere here over the decades.

Larry holds no religious beliefs but feels strongly aligned with Christian Aid's values. 'I yield to nobody in terms of my support for the principles underpinning the charity's efforts', he says. It is those shared ideals of dignity, equality and justice that sit at the sale's heart.

Larry also recognises the sense of community the event evokes. 'This sale brings so many people together – volunteering their time, donating books to sell. It speaks well of mankind', he says. 'That's why I keep coming back. It matters.'

Donations are welcome: 9am–8pm, 27 April–2 May, 4–7 May. Sale runs: 10am–4pm, 9 May; noon–6pm, 11–15 May. A longer version of this article appears on our website (1.5.26).

Four words of hope

Hasting from hustings to hustings, it can feel like the May elections are not going to change very much, at least not for the better, writes *Frank Strang*, one of those behind *Scotland's Four Words of Hope – a new non-party political project, led from Leith*.

SFWH plans to help tackle the sinking feeling that on the day after the election everything will be the same old same old, with so much scope for matters to be debated and decided much better.

The project is promoting wisdom, compassion, justice and integrity: the fabulous four words inscribed on the head of the Mace of the Scottish Parliament.

In the short term, SFWH will encourage people, including candidates, to pledge their support for the words. In the longer term, it will deliver ways to determine whether these values are happening in reality and help elected members to be guided by them in what they do and say.



Things can only get better

Updates for the Transport & Environment Cmte last month reported future road-safety, traffic and footway improvements. Local highlights:

Abercromby Pl. All road marking/signage by Apr 2026. **Bonnington Rd.** Parking restrictions around Bun sgoil Taobh na Pairce, in progress. **Broughton St.** Footway flagstones, 2026/27. **Canon St.** Footway surface treatment, 2026/27. **Dryden St.** Carriageway surface treatment, 2026/27. **Dublin St/Abercromby Pl.** Ongoing discussions about restoring E–W traffic priority and improving pedestrian safety/convenience. **Gt King St (St Vincent St end).** Non-signalised crossing – work to start when contractor found. **Pilrig St.** Uncontrolled crossing with island at Cambridge Av – TRO underway. All road marking/signage by Apr 2026. Asphalt footway, 2026/27. **Queen St.** Footway high-amenity flagstones, 2026/27. **Regent Rd.** Footway high-amenity flagstones, 2026/27. **Rodney St.** All road marking/signage by Apr 2026. Footway flagstones, 2026/27.

North Berwick–Edinburgh record. A new attempt

Abridged from the Scotsman (19 April 1926):—Public enthusiasm for marathons has received an impetus since E. H. Fernie (Canon Athletic Sports Club) created the record of 2 hrs 54 mins for the N. Berwick–Edinburgh road run [on 1 Jan]—a distance of approximately 25 miles.

An unsuccessful attempt was made recently by Dr A. Miller (Edinburgh Univ. Hare & Hounds), who collapsed at Portobello, when he required to reach the General Post Office, Edinburgh, in 17 mins to equal record time.

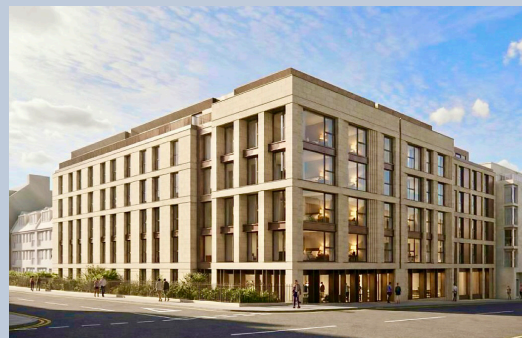
On Saturday, J. D. Horsburgh (Edinburgh S Harriers) made another unsuccessful attempt, finishing 1 min. 15 secs outside the record, despite sometimes being 17 mins inside Fernie's time. Ideal conditions prevailed, but Horsburgh lost on the very stretch where Fernie had gained, having started spurting, mainly, from Musselburgh to the finish. With conditions such as Saturday's, the record might have been beaten, as on the day it was created anything but favourable weather was experienced.

In Nov 1928, the 24-year-old Fernie (a Falkirk stonemason) beat his own N Berwick–Edinburgh record with a time of 2:45:24. See [bit.ly/NBwk2Ed].



AI Image: www.perchance.org

Briefly



As predicted in Issue 358, **Evans Dakota** proposes a 7-storey, 143-bdrm hotel with ancillary ground-floor bar and restaurant on the site of Centrum and BUPA Houses at **108–14 and 116 Dundas St** (26/01504/FUL). The new build apparently 'repairs the damage to the urban grain caused by the current structures'.

The questionable smell of Taco Bell has come to an end at **6 Picardy Pl**. Neighbours who endured **cooking pongs** and late-night customer noise after the outlet opened in 2023 are pleased. Now the premises are on the market at a yearly rent of over £45k.

A new tabletop gaming tavern is taking shape at **39–41 Broughton St**. As well as things to eat and drink, Potions & Rations (a play on Dungeons & Dragons) promises a **wide range of board games** to play and buy, introductory sessions for beginners and **Talk Together Tuesdays** encouraging friendly support and chats. It aims to be 'A place to meet friends, share stories, **roll dice, laugh loudly and have fun.**' More at [bit.ly/4mFwT3U].

The Planet Bar at **6 Baxter's Pl** seeks to replace fixed middle-panel windows at the front with bi-folding doors (**26/01391/FUL**). It says 'bringing the outside in' will improve natural ventilation and daylight while respecting the building's **A-listed Georgian character**. We suspect 'enhanced visibility of the venue from the street, contributing positively to footfall and customer engagement' may be more important considerations for the applicant. Nearby, neighbours object to **Taste of Italy's** proposals for new foldaway benches outside **9 Baxter's Pl**. Supplemented by tables and chairs, these would, they say, block access to their front door and the fire exit and ramp for Topping's at **2–3a Blenheim Pl**.

If the SNP is re-elected in May and delivers on its pledge to create 30 new walk-in GP facilities across Scotland, local MSP Ben Macpherson wants the next Edinburgh one to be at **Ocean Terminal**. He says the location's transport links, accessible facilities and existing building would provide a cost-effective solution for **Leith and North Edinburgh's** underserved primary-healthcare needs. He has written to the First Minister saying so.

German manufacturer **Vestas** plans to build a £250m 'nacelle and hub' factory in Scotland to meet growing demand for **offshore energy capture** in the UK and Europe. With a following wind from Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Govt, **Leith Docks** may prove a suitable base.

Moreover ..



'Hallelujah!' wrote Martin McDonnell on Bluesky last month. 'The **Gayfield Sq** air vents have been repaired! Well over 3 years since the tramworks team broke them.' What, we asked, was being vented through the cycleway? 'Gas,' replies McDonnell. 'General disquiet,' suggests **edi.bike**.

A new restaurant, **The Cottage at Royal Terrace**, will open at the Gardener's cottage in Royal Ter Gdns this May (Issue 360). Behind the venture is **Peter Adshead**, whose previous capital experience includes the Balmoral, Caledonian and Macdonald Holyrood Hotels, the **Lookout, Riparian Rooms** and Loudons.

There were 32 objections in March to the Adria Hotel's application for an alcohol licence at **11 Royal Ter**. Neighbours feared noisy drinkers would spill uphill into the rear garden. A site visit by councillors took place last month. A decision will follow.

Offers over £115k are invited for the Private Shop premises at **60 Elm Row**. Like other such high-street outlets in recent years, the business has faced increasingly stiff competition on the Internet.

In 2021, the Scottish Govt said it was moving to create a stand-alone **Gaelic-speaking** secondary school in Edinburgh city centre. **Cllr Caldwell (Ward 12)** recently pressed the Education, Children & Families Cmte Convener (Cllr Dalgleish, Ward 12) on **how many meetings** the Council and Scottish Govt have held to identify an appropriate site. **The answer was 2:** one in 2022, one in 2023. As they say in Bonnington: *Air mhèud 's a their na sìobh, cha ghlòir a dhearbhas ach gnìomh.*

The next meeting of the Broughton History Society will be on 4 May at 6pm in **McDonald Rd Library**. Andy Arthur will talk on 'The History of Drummond Community High School'.

Officials acknowledge that the grotty and easily capsized portaloos in the shadow of the **Nelson Monument** please no one. Rather than turn a blind eye to the problem, they now propose building a **portakabin block** (to be closed at night) on the north side of Calton Hill above the **Regent Gdn** steps. This would be a marginally less unsatisfactory stopgap until funds and a suitable design can be found for a **permanent structure** where every person can do their duty in comfort.

STOP PRESS:—Mandale Homes proposes to demolish the former nursery at **32–34 Heriothill Ter** and build ten, 3-storey, 3-bdrm townhouses, some with parking (26/01422/FUL). This scheme is **different to** the consented but unbuilt one on land parallel to Broughton Rd (15/02335/FUL). **Claremont neighbours** fear subsidence and loss of light. See our website 22.1.26.

Spartle Team: E. Brown, P. Cockburn, E. Dickie, C. Ellis, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, V. Kirby, A. McIntosh, S. Michael, H. Muir, M. Orr, W. Quinn, C. Roussot, E. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.
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QUEEN STREET GARDENS



To the Proprietors of Queen Street Gardens (Eastern District) and of the houses in Heriot Row, Queen Street and Wemyss Place (Central and Western Districts)

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Proprietors will be held at The Royal Scots Club, 29-31 Abercromby Place, Edinburgh, on **Monday 18 May 2026 at 6.20 pm** in terms of the Act of Parliament.

A meeting of the General Commissioners for the three districts will be held immediately after the meeting of the Proprietors.

C. Roussot, Clerk, c/o Royal Scots Club, 29-31 Abercromby Place, Edinburgh

LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

We're here to represent your views – from planning to clean streets and green spaces.



Follow us online, come along to a meeting, or email us directly at secretary@leithcentralcc.co.uk

NEXT MEETING AT
7pm ON 18th MAY
IN McDONALD ROAD LIBRARY