

# Spurtle



Find us at: [www.broughtonspurtle.org.uk](http://www.broughtonspurtle.org.uk)



**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER** Free

**July  
2026**

**No 363**

**Tel: 07455 770474**

**spurtle@hotmail.co.uk**

## NEW LEAP OF FAITH FOR ST STEPHEN'S

Developer and theatrical producer Peter Schaufuss has put St Stephen's Church on the market with a guide price of £3m.

The A-listed property, which closed for worship in 1992, was bought by Rockstar North producer Leslie Benzies for £500k in 2014 (Issue 228). It then served as a community hub. Since 2017, it has been upgraded by the current owner as a 2-stage performance venue with total seating for 1,300 people. Estate agent Culverwell says the building generates about £175k per year from long- and short-term lets.

The iconic Playfair-designed building boasts, the company says, 'a multitude of architectural and historic features not seen elsewhere'. It does not elaborate on how expensive it is to maintain this same multitude, or on constraints for what can be done with the structure.

However, the property already enjoys permission for a lift and solar panels, and there are unconsented plans for 2 residential units in the attic.

In 2016, Mr Schaufuss, a Danish choreographer and former ballet dancer, spent £1.8m converting the old Charlotte Methodist Chapel into the Rose St Theatre. In 2023 he sold it for a reported £3m. In April this year, Morningbridge Ltd gained planning consent to convert the building into a 43-bdrm hotel with rooftop café/bar.



## DIM VIEW OF GLAZED LOOK

Plans to demolish an outbuilding and 1930s extension to then create 23 new rooms behind the hotel at 34-38 York Pl have been withdrawn (Issue 362). There were 10 public objections to the proposal and others from the Cockburn Assoc and New Town & Broughton Community Council.

City Archaeologist John A. Lawson said doing away with the Georgian news building would spoil both the A-listed property and the character of the New Town Conservation Area and Edinburgh World Heritage site. He recommended refusing consent.

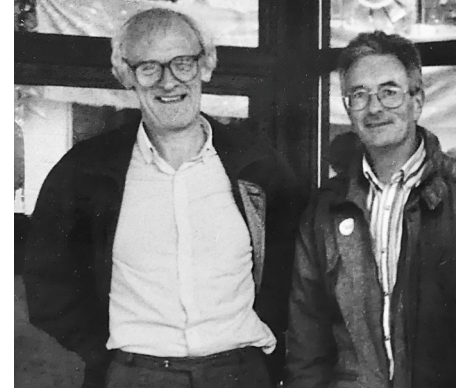
Historic Environment Scotland agreed the mews building should be kept. It said the proposed extension's increased height would obscure views from the York Pl building and erode the lane's character. It said natural stone rubble would be better than cast ashlar in terms of quality, technical performance and historic context.



HES said formation of an external glazed corridor would block views to and from the back of Nos 34-38 and 'should be resisted'. It also suggested repositioning another link bridge.

It is hard to see how any proposal of similar scale in future could avoid the problems encountered by this one.

## Gavin MacGregor (1941-2026)



Gavin Mackenzie MacGregor – a founding member of the *Spurtle*, contributor and occasional editor – died on 25 May, aged 85. With a career background in local government, he was a committed local activist and champion of children's rights through his work on the Scottish Children's Panel. An extra-sec wit and Broughton man through and through, he lived in the same East London St flat occupied by his family since 1914. A longer obituary will follow. He is pictured above (right) with *Spurtle's* first editor John Dickie at the 1997 Scotland Yard Community Fair.

## ART OF THE CROSSABLE

In March, we reported moves to address the Bellevue Pl refuge outside Drummond CHS, which is a hazard to pedestrians and drivers alike (Issue 359). An extended footway on the S side, with dropped kerbs and tactile paving, is now anticipated.

However, there are also straws in the wind about widening the traffic island between Bellevue Pl and Bellevue Rd, creating a pleasanter pedestrian area with rain garden. This would be an attractive feature in its own right but could also prevent illegal parking here and help reduce flooding at the corner of Bellevue Rd and W Annandale St.

Cllr Caldwell (Ward 12) welcomes the ambitious rain-garden idea but wants Council officers to install the safer school crossing first and soon. He will contact locals over the summer seeking views about outline proposals.



# Briefly



This sign on **McDonald Rd** irritates local resident David Sterratt. It may be faded almost to invisibility and positioned out of sight **halfway up a lamppost**, but it shouldn't be there. It is well over 3 years since tramworks on **Leith Walk** ceased to necessitate rerouting N-S cyclists via Annandale St Lane, Cambridge Gdns, Balfour St and Bonnington Rd. We welcome any further examples of **redundant signage** which readers suspect may annoy Mr Sterratt.

Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by growing work responsibilities? At May's full Council meeting, **Cllr Graham (Ward 11)** sought greater support for the lone official managing **1,636 allotment plots across 32 sites**. That individual's duties include: annual invoicing, maintaining a waiting list of 5,896 residents which grows by about **25 new applications per week**, inspecting plots, ensuring general health & safety and interacting with holders.w

New Town & Broughton Community Council remains frustrated by officers' **failure to consult enough** on communal bins (Issue 362). With ward councillors unable to push the matter much further, we understand NTBCC'S official complaint to the **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman** becomes likelier.

Reports and snippets from this publication are now available to the 3 billion active users of **Instagram**: @broughton\_sputtle. We look forward to welcoming them all to our next hustings in **spring 2027**.

A recent **BBC Scotland** report found 2,376 pothole-related compensation claims were made against Edinburgh Council in the years 2020/21–2024/25 [bbc.in/3SCjXAP]. The Council has **paid out £48k** in response to 154 of them. An Automobile Assoc source said its monthly average of **reported incidents** in Scotland in 2026 has increased to 5,295. The real figure, including **all vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians** is much higher. Edinburgh paid out on only 6% of claims (below the British local-authority average of 24%), suggesting its pockets aren't as deep as its craters.

**STOP PRESS:** On 24 June, officials closed Powderhall Bridge (between **St Mark's Park and St Mark's Path**) after the structure failed an inspection. 'Severe splitting' in **wooden top chord nodes** appears to be the problem. No date has been set for the bridge to reopen, although **locals continue to use it**. It's unclear whether doing so is dangerous. See [bit.ly/4oID6Nu].

Responding to a Council survey, **Calton Hill Conservation Trust** says last year's Firework Control Zone was successful, with **minimal breaches**. Firework discharges outwith the 31 Oct–9 Nov period also fell. The Council's **Trading Standards Service** reports the number of shops in Edinburgh selling fireworks has **reverse-skyrocketed** from 33 in 2024 to 2 in 2025.

## On first looking into Council's profiles

Granular 'Place Profiles' are required for the new City Development Plan 2040, looking at people, infrastructure and key features in each Council ward. Edinburgh's Planning Cmte agreed them last month. They are fascinating.

Each based on between 5 and 8 substantial and reputable data sources, they contain far too much information on 26 baseline topics to summarise here. Instead, we list some key challenges identified for wards intersecting Greater Spurtleshire.

- **Inverleith:** Not enough evenly spread health facilities; too much traffic; unbalanced community growing spaces; poor environmental cleanliness and maintenance; insufficient public-transport links to hospitals.

- **City Centre:** Not enough GPs and dentists, affordable housing options, cleaned and maintained open spaces, useful non-tourist-tat shops, community spaces; too many hot-food takeaways, pubs, entertainment venues, short-term lets.

- **Leith Walk:** Concerns about safety and policing; not enough access to health care and growing spaces; negative impact of hot-food takeaways, pubs, entertainment venues and beauty shops; cold/damp housing; too much traffic, weekend free parking and pedestrian/cyclist conflict. Young people worry about climate change and complain that socialising is too expensive.

These Place Profiles, far more complex and suggestive than captured here, should interest anyone concerned about understanding, maintaining, surviving or improving their own and others' circumstances. We recommend a wild surmise at Resources [bit.ly/4gCK2K6].



## Short-term lets – gaming the system shown in figures

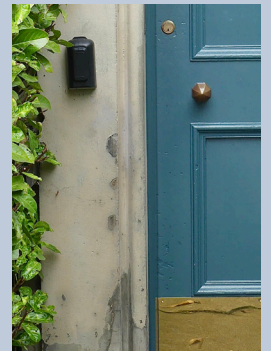
In Issue 361, we explained how Council rules regulating short-term lets are no longer fit for purpose. Through precise questions to the Convener of the Development Management Sub-Cmte, Cllr Booth (Ward 13) has now helped quantify the scale of the problem.

Results appear in tabular form at Item 10.12 [bit.ly/4w3u9Rs]. Notable points comparing the whole of 2025 (italics>) and the first quarter of 2026 include the number of valid STL applications: 688, 91; and the number of certificate of lawfulness applications: 270, 102.

Of those cases:

- Previous applications: 80%, 80%
- Previous withdrawals: 9%, 1%
- Previous refusals: 51%, 2%
- Previous appeals/dismissed/allowed: 61% / 40% / 6%; 67% 0% 0%
- Council refusals to determine: 0%, 15%.
- Where applications were refused, no planning enforcement action followed in 81% of cases in 2025 and 100% in Q1 2026.

The figures reveal administrative churn in which officials repeat a meaningless process while canny STL owners continue to trade, often in inappropriate places. The system is both lame and toothless. Last month, Council Leader Jane Meagher and Chief Executive Paul Lawrence wrote to the First Minister urging an urgent fix for legislative flaws (Issues 361, 362).



## Live in fragments no longer

A New Town householder last month applied for consent to form double 'jib (secret doors) connecting hitherto separate rooms on one floor of their A-listed home. The proportion of the doors and continuation across them of the adjacent wall panels would disguise the change and preserve the original layout.

The application's design statement asserts that, 'Contemporary living is based on connected spaces that flow together and can be flexibly used. Period houses [as here] were not designed in this way. However, if these grand buildings are to be invested in, maintained and enjoyed in current lifestyles, sensitive adaptation that does not significantly alter the character should be allowed.'

It may surprise some readers to learn that current lifestyles exclude people moving from one room to another via the hall.

## Red light for wider access to private green spaces

At last month's Culture & Communities Cmte, Cllr Heap (Ward 7) sought a report on voluntary opening of private gardens for public access, with possible Council help to cover increased maintenance, cleaning and insurance costs. His motion was defeated 6:5.

Where gardens are owned by businesses and institutions (e.g. St Andrew and Charlotte Sq Gdns), we understand how this might work. Where they are owned by householders, we see little prospect of cooperation.

A debate on this and related garden issues blossomed on the *Sputtle* website. See Michael Worobec's assertions in May [bit.ly/MWgard] and Michael Upton's rebuttal in June [bit.ly/MUgdn].



## Fresh campaign for green corridor



*Chris Hill and Andy Arthur's new website (www.Powderhall.Link) campaigns for creation of a long anticipated green travel corridor between St Mark's Park and Lochend ... and beyond. Below, Hill explains the context.*

In April, the SNP launched its manifesto. I was very surprised and pleased to read: 'We will also support efforts to bring the former Powderhall railway line into use as a new walking and cycling route in the capital.'

*Spurtle* readers will recall that the line has been out of use for 10 years. In that time, the Council has been 'in negotiations' with Network Rail. How often they talk, or what about, is not public.

Newly re-elected MSP Ben Macpherson recently told the *Sunday National*, 'I look forward to working with all the bodies involved to make this happen sooner rather than later.' Transport Scotland says it's aware of the manifesto commitment but that it's up to the Council to develop and prioritise projects, then apply for Scottish Govt funding.

The Powderhall Link should be much more than just an Active Travel route between the North Edinburgh Path Network and points east. Opening this route would allow people (especially those in nearby flats) to access green space and local destinations more easily.

But the same old problems persist. Network Rail still owns the land. DB Cargo UK has a contract to operate freight services until 2119. Uncertainty remains about bridges, structures and liabilities.

The SNP must do more to act on its manifesto words.

## Bench recalls local hero

On Calton Hill's Regent Walk, overlooking the former grounds of his alma mater, a memorial bench commemorates Royal High School pupil Douglas Ford (1918–43).

Ford was a gifted rugby and cricket player who graduated as school captain in 1936 and joined the Royal Scots at the outbreak of the Second World War. He was captured by the Japanese and sent to Sham Shui Po POW Camp after Hong Kong fell on Christmas Day 1941.

Captain Ford maintained morale despite the bleak conditions, played a key role in smuggling in food and medical supplies, and was among those who plotted a mass breakout with the assistance of the British Army Aid Group.

After Japanese military police uncovered the plot, Ford endured 5 months of brutal interrogation and starvation but refused to name co-conspirators. His courage won the admiration even of his torturers. Forced to dig his own grave at Shek O Beach, he was then executed by firing squad on 18 Dec 1943.

Ford was posthumously awarded the George Cross, Colonel White concluding that his 'cold, calculating courage, soldierly behaviour and conduct at this time might conceivably have been equalled in the proud annals of the Regiment, but it certainly could not have been surpassed'.

The memorial bench was presented by Boroday Pang, Ford's niece Elizabeth and RHS representatives at a ceremony last year.

For further details see [\[bit.ly/43KOZZR\]](https://bit.ly/43KOZZR).—*Hannah Muir*



Image: The Royal High School Club.

## Scottish tuition, English fruition

*From the Edinburgh Evening News (2 April 1892):*—The 21st match between the representatives of England and Scotland in Association football at Ibrox Park will possess features of unusual interest.

The great advance made by England within half-a-dozen years in the Association game has been largely due to Scottish tuition and it is not too much to say that Scotsmen across the Borders revolutionised the pastime as played in England, and their teaching has been so closely followed that no one can now say, with any degree of confidence, that either country command a favourable issue.

It is changed days with international matches. A score of years ago one club furnished the whole Scottish team; now, the complaint is not the lack of players. There are so many players that it is almost impossible to select elevens satisfactory to critics. It is only fair to say that seldom has an eleven drawn from so many clubs gained public approval in the same measure as the team of to-day.

In recent years the East had just cause to grumble at being cold-shouldered in the choice of players. But in the last two seasons this has been changed. Last season four Eastern men played in the great match of the year, and to-day three players virtually trained in this district won their caps. [In the April 1892 match, England narrowly prevailed 1:4.]



Image: Wikipedia Creative Commons.

## Briefly



It is now **200 years** since 'T.E. Howell, Druggist', began trading at **11 Elm Row**, making this Scotland's oldest pharmacy. **Robert Lindsay** took over in 1828. **William Gilmour** joined in 1863 and received a Royal Warrant in 1921. **Cllr Caldwell** (Ward 12) has asked the Lord Provost to mark the occasion in an appropriate manner. Your suggestions, please. Keep them clean.

Since May 2025, **BuildEdinburgh** has aired lively discussion of housing, architecture and urban design across Edinburgh. Last month it featured an appreciation of the former Catholic Apostolic Church on **Mansfield PI**: [\[bit.ly/CACMTC\]](https://bit.ly/CACMTC).

After 8 years, quirkily QWERTY Typewronger Books has left **4A Haddington PI** for a new location at **22 Bruntsfield PI**. Spyglass Books, specialising in children's and illustrated works, will take over the **McNaughtan's-adjacent** space sometime this autumn.

When Visitor Levy funds were targeted in part at fixing setted streets, locals assumed £1.5m repairs for **E. London St** would begin sooner (Issue 359). Then officials announced work would not start until 2029 [\[bit.ly/CllrQs0526\]](https://bit.ly/CllrQs0526). Cllr McFarlane (Ward 11) is applying pressure for a rethink.

Calling capital caseophiles: 'The Big Cheese' is ripening at **27 Broughton St** and will enhance the current traditional high-street offering of butcher, baker, greengrocer, fishmonger, chemist, newsagents, cafés and pubs. **What would you like to see next?** An ironmonger, perhaps? Or post office, bank or public toilet? Stocks, anyone?

A new bus shelter has been erected on the south side of **McDonald Rd** between **Bellevue Rd** and **McDonald St**. Meanwhile, the **Edinburgh Bus Users Group** asks locals to report stops which are unsatisfactory because they: (a) have been permanently/temporarily removed or closed; (b) lack basic facilities. See [\[bit.ly/EBUGrep\]](https://bit.ly/EBUGrep).

Sweet pill to swallow: Hanover Healthfoods (**40 Hanover St**) has been named Best Specialist Retailer in Scotland at the annual **Scottish Independent Retail Awards**.

Since Jan 2025, **Leith Central Community Council** has pushed (in a firm but safety-conscious fashion) for urgent repairs to the collapsing wall on **Arthur St**. At last, Council contractors will do the work in Sept. Owners will be billed afterwards.

Officers have consented Tri Scotland's plans to convert former office space at **125 McDonald Rd** into 14 serviced apartments. Meanwhile, UKBAR proposes turning A-listed **33 York PI** into 5 short-term lets (26/02273/LBC). A Mr Wong proposes the same number of STL apartments in restaurant space at B-listed **14 S St Andrew St**.

# Moreover ...



We were pleased to hear from Tommy Zyw last month, whose father **Adam Zyw** (1948–2003) designed the Leith Walk benches beside **Gayfield Sq.** 'For our family, it is deeply meaningful to see his work preserved and appreciated, helping to keep his memory alive.' For a **Times obituary** of the artist, see [[bit.ly/AZyw](http://bit.ly/AZyw)].

Out of the Blue last month took up a 75-year lease on the B-listed former school at the top of **Easter Rd.** OotB will now continue extending its studio and workshop presence, which it has had there since 2017, by developing additional spaces for **culture, small businesses and learning.** Urgent work has already started to improve the building's fabric, sustainable heating and access for all.

Adults bored by **playing with their food** could soon be feeding slot machines instead. Luxury Leisure hopes to turn the former Pizza Hut at **34–36 Hanover St** into an adult gaming centre.

**Broughton St Flowers** awaits funding to turn an unused billboard beside the shop into an art initiative. Every 3 months, a panel will select a new work from **open-call submissions** for display under a mural donated by Edinburgh-trained artist Wreckage.

**Tribe Yoga** has ended its May challenge initiative, which encouraged clients to attend **30 classes in 31 days**, affirming 'Today's good mood is sponsored by Tribe.' Tribe's own good mood was, of course, **improved a lot** by the £250 it cost each person to participate.

At **23 Elm Row**, Joseph Pearce's £280k refurb will see it close until late July. Passers-by will notice a change from exterior **magenta to black**, but new furnishings and a wider choice of hours and menu are also in the offing. Local resident **Paul Henderson** will manage for Star Pubs.

Laughing all the way to the bank, the **Stand Comedy Club** plans to turn staff accommodation (over the road at **5 York Pl**) into a 2-bdrm short-term let.

The northbound stop on **Drummond Pl** (Services 9 and 13) informs passengers buses are heading '**For City Centre**'. Signage on the southbound stop states buses are coming '**From City**'. Wrong on both counts.

After 11 years, Mandala Flow has flitted from **16 Rodney St.** Its founders will now direct their energies elsewhere. The property is **on the market** at a rent of £19k per year.

**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.  
**Post:** Broughton Spartle, c/o The Yard, 61–3 Broughton Street, EH1 3RJ.  
**Printed by** Edinburgh Copy Shop, 52 St Mary's Street.



**THE DRAWING ROOM**  
**GENTLEMEN'S HAIRSTYLIST**  
**23B DUNDAS STREET**  
**TEL. 07565 208767**  
 MON–FRI, 10AM–6PM; SAT, 10–3PM  
 BY APPOINTMENT OR WALK IN

Prices	
Haircut	£27
Clipper all over	£20
Back and side	£20
Beard trim	£10
Senior	£20
Boys 12 & under	£20
Ear & nose wax	£10

**Lorna Slater MSP**  
 Member of the Scottish Parliament  
 for Lothian Region



You can contact me by:

- ✉ [Lorna.Slater.MSP@parliament.scot](mailto:Lorna.Slater.MSP@parliament.scot)
- ✉ **MG.14 The Scottish Parliament, EH99 1SP**
- ☎ **0131 348 6997**

You can find me on:

- 📷 @lornagreens
- 🐦 @lornaslater.bsky.social
- ✉ @lornaslater
- 📘 @LornaSlaterMSP



The costs of this publication have been met from parliamentary resources

## 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](mailto:secretary@leithcentralcc.co.uk)

**NEXT MEETING AT**  
**7pm on 17th AUGUST**  
**IN McDONALD ROAD LIBRARY**

REGISTERING NEW

# NHS PATIENTS

Scan to register



- Routine Check-Ups and Cleans
- Preventive Care and Fillings
- Cosmetic Dentistry
- Restorative Treatments
- Emergency Dental Care
- ...and much more.

## Register Today!

☎ 0131 608 3219



103 East London Street, Edinburgh, EH7 4BF  
 info@103dentalandimplantpractice.co.uk  
 www.103dentalandimplantpractice.co.uk

## The Eye Delights

Personal Colour Consultancy  
 By Sal Allison

DISCOVER THE COLOUR PALETTE WHICH MAKES YOU LOOK AND FEEL YOUR BEST!

Book a personal consultation in the comfort of your own home and receive a personalised digital colour fan and inspirational mood board  
 £100

Also makes a fantastic gift for a loved one or an extra special 18<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> birthday present!  
 Book a small group session to do with friends (£50 per person)

Discover more at [www.theeyedelights.com](http://www.theeyedelights.com)  
**Make a booking** - [theeyedelights@gmail.com](mailto:theeyedelights@gmail.com)



## YOUR ROAD TO RECOVERY

Injured through no fault of your own?  
 We help people across Scotland recover compensation following:

- 🚗 Road Traffic Accidents
- 🏢 Workplace Accidents
- 🏥 Medical Negligence
- 👮 Professional Negligence

🛡️ **FREE CLAIM ASSESSMENT**  
 NO WIN NO FEE AVAILABLE

☎ **0800 208 4980**

🌐 [accidentscotland.com](http://accidentscotland.com)

🇬🇧 SCOTLAND-WIDE REPRESENTATION



SCAN FOR FREE ADVICE or visit [accidentscotland.com](http://accidentscotland.com)

Accident Scotland is a trading style of Stewart Legal Solicitors Ltd.



your urban sanctuary  
 in the heart of the new town

quiet calm luxury

discover more at [www.lumapilates.co.uk](http://www.lumapilates.co.uk)

15 NORTHUMBERLAND STREET NORTH EAST LANE EDINBURGH EH3 6LN