

# Spurtle



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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER** Free

**October  
2026**

**No 366**

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## PRINCES STREET PLAN 'UNAMBITIOUS AND BORING'

Edinburgh Council's Planning Cmte last month backed 'ambitious' and 'pragmatic' plans for Princes St and the Waverley Valley. These were not the 'ambitious and exciting' plans its members had called for back in Nov 2025.

Consented improvements include: a widened footway on the south side;

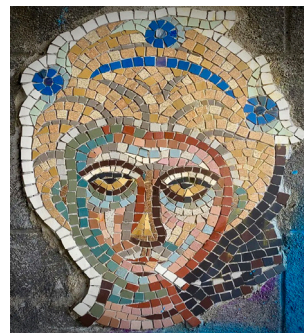
easier access to the Ross Bandstand and gardens (plus longer opening hours, better lighting and new cafés and toilets); more cycle parking; a potential bus gate at the east end; more seating. 'Crucially,' said Planning Convener Cllr Griffiths, 'this differs from previous plans in that it is affordable and deliverable'.

Cycling campaigners Spokes had wanted better and safer provision for bike riders, given that Princes St is underused by other traffic for much of the day. They concluded the approved strategy is not a place plan worthy of Edinburgh's premier street.

Various heritage bodies and New Town & Broughton Community Council have greeted the proposal as a first step in the right direction, but one which does not consider the thoroughfare's post-retail future, transport priorities or the knock-on effects of parallel initiatives for George St and Waverley Station. Many questions will remain, even when more detailed plans are brought forward next year.



## Smoke, maybe. No fire



Reader Simon Holledge tells us his recent discovery of this mosaic portrait in Broughton St Lane points to some Roman bathhouse having once stood nearby. He suggests the site may be connected to Spurtolium, the settlement mentioned in a 3<sup>rd</sup>-century itinerary known as *Iter Britanniarum*: 'Statio in agro Caledoniae sita, ubi indigenae pulcem baculo ligneo, quem "spurtle" vocant, agitare solent.' We hae oor doots. Filter-tipped cigarettes did not appear in Broughton until 1930.

## NO NEW BRIDGE TILL 2028

If a full replacement is required for the Powderhall Footbridge, it will not be operational until early 2028. This was the stark response of Culture & Communities Convener Cllr Graham (Ward 11) to recent questions posed by Cllr Caldwell (Ward 12).

The timeframe is explained by the months it would take to understand the structural report, establish a budget, procure a new bridge, then manufacture and install it. The necessary funding would not be available until next financial year, starting in Apr 2027.

Meanwhile, public anger grows at the apparent absence of full inspections since 2014, the Council's lack of data about how many people use the bridge, poor diversion signposting, and no information for or engagement with locals.

We are aware of widespread calls for temporary reinforcement of the existing structure, an alternative diversion using the nearby rail bridge, and accelerated access to emergency contingency funds. However, the effectiveness of buttressing is dismissed by engineers, the rail bridge looks flaky, and officers have identified no alternative in-year sources of funding.

Leith Central and New Town & Broughton Community Councils have asked for an officer to attend their meetings to answer questions.

## DRUMMOND CHS CELEBRATES CENTENARY

Former and current pupils and teachers gathered last month to celebrate 100 years of Drummond Community High School. It opened in 1926 as Bellevue Intermediate School.

Heads of School Sakina Dirra and Amar Singh led the speeches. They celebrated how a 'brown boy in turban and a brown girl in hijab' were now recognised. They reflected on the way Drummond 'led the charge' for inclusive education in the 1980s.

Headteacher Rachel Robertson said, 'A school is more than bricks and mortar. It is also a mirror of society.' She was proud that Drummond reflects its community's diversity (63 languages spoken and an annual celebration of culture); proud that the school places pupils escaping conflict throughout the world.

There followed tours of the school, displays of photos and artefacts from the archives, and a former pupil's slide show.—DS See [[bit.ly/DCHS100](https://bit.ly/DCHS100)].



## ZIG-ZAG SNAG WITH SIMPLE SOLUTION

Locals are unhappy about the zig-zagging covered walkway under scaffolding alongside Albany House on Broughton St.

The temporary 30m structure is intended to protect pedestrians from falling items during construction work. But since it's unlit and you can't see the end of it as you enter, or be seen as you pass through, pessimists regard it as a mugger's paradise. Some are straying into the road rather than use it.

Critics say it's a poor response to some 'lazy' scaffolding design, neither of which officials should have approved. Dropping the level of the 'wall' on the eastern side would at least allow users to see and be seen.

Cllr Mowat (Ward 11) has taken up the case, and that of obstructive site offices on the Albany St carriageway.



# Briefly



Whilst applauding the comparative tidiness of **Picardy PI**'s recent makeover, some locals find the new enclaves of unrelieved grass rather soulless. Perhaps officials could **enliven the area** with a modest pitch-and-putt course. Paradoxically, grass requires more maintenance by **Parks & Greenspace staff** than shrubbery or wild flowers. We understand further tree planting will take place this month.

**Celadon 2U**, the popular Thai restaurant and carry-out at **52 Rodney St** has closed. The eatery took its name (and decor) from **greenware pottery** produced in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Thailand.

On 3 Sept, London-based Streetvox appealed to the Scottish Govt against the Council's **refusal of consent** for a temporary illuminated advertisement within a scaffold shroud at **109 Princes St**. This, despite most of the property burning down on 9 July.

A *rinnovamento di buon gusto* is planned for the Taste of Italy restaurant at **9 Baxter's PI**. New signage will follow, and there are plans to ditch the frameless, large-pane glazing and insert a **traditional timber stall-riser** painted Reed Green and Brown Red. The proposed renovation and redesign will 'align with the standards of a **Vittoria Group** restaurant' while improving the frontage and enhancing the local streetscape. Who recalls the **Rankin's Fruit Markets** premises here in the 1980s, with fresh produce under awnings over the footway?

Ottolenghi Edinburgh opened at **92 George St** on 2 Oct, serving 'vegetable-forward' **Mediterranean and Middle Eastern** fusions. If you prefer your vegetables backward and unfused, stick to McDonald's.

UKBAR's proposal to convert office space into 5 short-term-let apartments at A-listed **33 York PI** has been withdrawn (26/02273/LBC).

Controversial conversion of the former Edinburgh City Football Club to 6 serviced apartments at **7 Baxter's PI** (Issue 357) has been approved after the developer agreed to pay £24k in tram contributions. Ching, ching! Ding, ding!

**Cycling Scotland's analysis** of traffic data for 13–14 May 2026 shows 5.6k bike journeys on **Leith Walk** between 8am and 9am, exceeding car journeys for the first time. In May, 67.6k cycles passed **Picardy PI** (up 25% on 2025). Bikes accounted for a record 4.7% of all travel methods on **York PI**. CS ascribes this to 'the growing impact of the new cycling infrastructure' [[bit.ly/EHbkrs](https://bit.ly/EHbkrs)].

The Firework Control Zone will next apply on **Calton Hill** for 9 nights from 30 Oct, banning all but organised displays. For the **commercial and medical** opportunities arising from such events, see our website on 5 Nov.

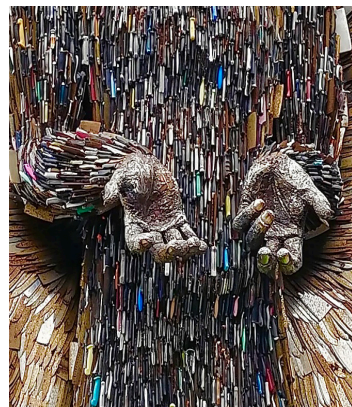
## Sharp thinking on knife crime

Alfie Bradley's 27ft *Knife Angel* sculpture, made from 100k knives and blades surrendered to UK police, was exhibited at the Kirkgate last month. Delivered alongside a programme of citywide events and workshops, it was created as 'a reminder of the impact violence can have on individuals, families and communities, while acting as a catalyst for social change'. These are welcome initiatives.

In a report to the Education, Children & Families Cmte last month ([bit.ly/knferm](https://bit.ly/knferm)), officials noted a 44% reduction in knife crime across Scotland between 2007 and 2020, with a slight increase since but not to pre-2007 levels.

Contrary to alarmist media coverage, most knife crime and related anti-social behaviour is not committed by people aged 18 or under. The average age of a person convicted for carrying a knife in Scotland is 29, and 85% of them are male. Of the people injured by knives in Scotland, 70% are hurt by their own weapon.

'Whilst it may appear this is an increasing issue amongst young people,' the report concludes, 'the data does not support this.' However, it acknowledges 'a perception of increased risk which creates fear and distress'. It asserts that the most effective way to address knife crime is a 'public health approach' recognising the multifaceted nature of the problem.



## Enforcement is key

Cllr Mowat (Ward 11) has called on members of the public to report unlicensed short-term lets whenever and wherever they find them. She says successful enforcement reduces risks to visitors in unregulated properties while improving fairness for residents and legitimate STL operators.

Mowat also says that the more enforcement cases officers undertake, the greater will be the body of evidence they can present to the Scottish Govt when arguing for legislative reform.

The law framing Council powers over STLs, introduced in 2022, set 'risible' penalties for unlicensed STL operators, says Mowat. Owners of unlicensed houses in multiple occupation face fines of up to £50k. The maximum fine for unlicensed STL owners is £2.5k. Such a sum can be recouped in less time than it takes to demoralise bedbugs.

Mowat says that the Scottish Govt has so far been slow to acknowledge the most important flaws in the drafting and practical functioning of the STL legislation.

To find out if an Edinburgh STL is licensed, or to report other problems with an STL, visit [[bit.ly/repSTL](https://bit.ly/repSTL)]. To report an unlicensed operation, email [PRSEenforcement@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:PRSEenforcement@edinburgh.gov.uk).



## Ins and outs of No 39

Planning officers using delegated powers have granted planning permission for Bluemarch Ltd's proposal to create 7 serviced apartments with integral manager's accommodation at A-listed 39 London St (26/01011/LBC).

Historic Environment Scotland welcomed the long-empty property's return to 'beneficial use' but called for retention of historic doors, plasterwork and a decorative anthemion ceiling rose. The Cockburn Assoc objected on grounds including the negative heritage impact of so much subdivision, loss of residential potential, intensification of use, and the cumulative harm to community from so many short-term lets in the area.

However, considering a parallel change-of-use application (26/01010/FULSTL), members of the Development Management Subcmte later followed officers' advice and found the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on residential amenity. There was potential for increased frequency of disruptive arrivals and departures at unsocial hours. Additional servicing of the property could also vex neighbours. Consent was refused.



In both applications, 33 individuals – none with any obvious connection to the area – wrote almost identical letters of support to the Council, some from as far afield as Dundee, Livingston, Peebles and Prestonpans. Interesting.

## Short strip with long-term implications

The Council is consulting on whether to change use of Common Goods Assets on Calton Hill. The strip of land in question connects Greenside Row to the rear gate of Greenside Church. That empty building and associated cottage will soon be offered for sale by the Church of Scotland.

Granting a deed of servitude here would allow any future owner of the church buildings a permanent right of vehicular access. To enable this, an existing bollard would be removed and some form of reinforced surface installed.

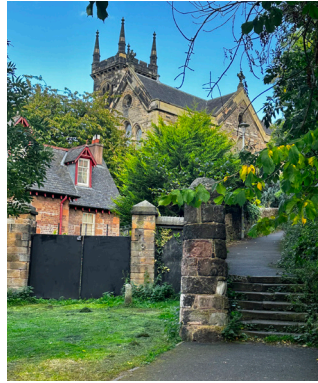
Those in favour of the change claim it would:

- increase the market value of the property
- widen the scope of potential uses for the structures
- help to ensure future preservation of the A-listed building
- formalise established informal access reduce future pressure on parking spaces along Blenheim Pl and Royal Ter.

Those against it argue:

- increasing market value is irrelevant to the general public
- improving access would result in efforts to replace the garden area behind Greenside Church with hard standing
- loss of any grassed areas here would worsen flooding risks for properties downhill
- improved vehicular access would lead to increased and unrestrictable levels of traffic on a quiet footpath and along narrow Greenside Row, resulting in loss of residential amenity
- principal access to the site should remain from Blenheim Pl with no additional on-street parking permits issued.

Have your say at [\[bit.ly/GrChAxs\]](https://bit.ly/GrChAxs) by 28 Oct.



## Briefly



Our thanks go to Tim Smith, who spotted this signage on **Pilrig St**. Thanks to the intervention of an unhelpful climber, it directs traffic into **Rosebank Cemetery**, which, as all locals know, is a dead end.

Last month, the Traffic Regulations Orders Subcmte agreed to create a new **Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ N9)** in the Fettes area. The move is in large part a response to the inconvenience for residents of **commuter parking**. The move was supported by some locals, objected to by others from outside the zone and by **Western General and Fettes Police HQ staff**. Proposals for the Werberside Development were dropped. The new arrangements will be monitored for effectiveness over their first year in case amendments are needed.

A petition hosted on the change.org website calls for 'immediate and effective action' by **elected representatives and Police Scotland** 'to stop the use of illegal e-bikes on the streets and cycle paths of Leith' [\[bit.ly/badebks\]](https://bit.ly/badebks). In fact, most e-bikes here are legal. It is the **unlicensed and uninsured riders** of bikes not limited to motorised assistance up to 15.5 mph, and **reckless riders** of all sorts, who are not. The petition, which has so far attracted 200 signatures, does not specify what kind of action it wants.

A reader tells us of **excellent service** by Council street cleaners. Having reported fly-tipping on the **E Claremont St** central reservation at 4.30pm on a Sunday, she was astonished to find the items cleared by **8.15am the next day**.

Those behind the RAAG St Andrew Hotel conversion from office use at A-listed **9–10 St Andrew Sq** seek planning consent to turn 4 storerooms into bedrooms (26/03309/LBC). Cosy.

The **Deep Sea chippy**, a much-loved Broughton institution for over a century, has slipped below the waves. Established in 1920 on **Union Pl** (facing Greenside from the former triangle of buildings at the centre of today's **Picardy Pl**), it moved to **Antigua St** in 1970. It will now be replaced by a branch of the Glasgow-based franchise **Toni's Pizza**.

**Ben Macpherson**, MSP for Edinburgh North Eastern & Leith, has stepped down as Minister for Innovation, Technology & Tertiary Education. He says he wants to spend more time **serving his constituency** and pursuing 'various political passions outwith government'.

On 30 Sept, the Development Management Subcmte hearing to consider revised proposals for **16–26 Forth St** (Issue 365) came too late for us to report here. Issue 367 will carry the news. After structural failure of a mature English oak behind **17 Inverleith Ter**, the remaining standing crown was considered unsafe. Officers agreed with experts who advised partial removal to leave a '**safe standing monolith**' for habitat and biodiversity value (26/0479/TCO).

## New after school club for Broughton

A new after-school club will open at Broughton St Mary's Parish Church in Jan 2027, once the not-for-profit organisation has registered as a charity. Bellevue After School Club plans to offer affordable and reliable term-time and holiday-club care for local families.

Minister Rev Laurene Lafontaine said BASC's 'commitment to working families, parental involvement and desire to become an active member within our community hub is refreshing'.

News of this welcome development came in a press release from the church last month [\[bit.ly/SpBASC\]](https://bit.ly/SpBASC). It was, in part, a carefully phrased response to *Spurtle's* coverage of former after-school provider Smart Cookies' Aug termination of its tenancy agreement (Issue 365).

To show interest, visit [\[www.bellevue-asc.co.uk\]](https://www.bellevue-asc.co.uk).

## Spotted in Gayfield Square

This loveliness of Harlequin ladybirds (*Harmonia axyridis*) was seen soaking up rays on Gayfield Sq's northeast wall last month.

Like many Gayfield residents, these normally solitary creatures aggregate in autumn before going dormant over the colder months; a phenomenon known as 'overwintering'. By releasing pheromones, they attract others to advantageous hiding spots in order to keep warm, share resources and enhance defences.

This Japanese species was first introduced to Europe in 1982 to control aphids. Although not intentionally brought to the UK, they had become established as an invasive species here by 2004.

Like many Gayfield residents, in the absence of sufficient food sources, they have been known to indulge in cannibalism.—HM



## Dalglish faces questions

Education, Children & Families Convener Dalglish (Ward 12) will appear before the Standards Commission for Scotland on 14 Oct for a possible breach of confidentiality.

As first reported in the *Edinburgh Evening News* (28.8.26), Dalglish acknowledges forwarding an emailed complaint about a committee decision to the complainant's employer. The complaint contained derogatory remarks about the councillor's intellect, competence, principles and courage.

Dalglish expressed concern to the employer about the message's tone and how it had been sent from a work email address during working hours.

After a separate complaint about this by the original complainant, the Ethical Standards Commissioner considered the matter and found evidence of a potential breach before referring the matter onward and upward.

Green councillors later demanded Dalglish's suspension as convener, a call which Council Leader Cllr Meagher dismissed as political opportunism and disrespectful of due process.

For breaches of a local authority's Code of Conduct, depending on seriousness, the Standards Commission can apply formal censure, suspension for up to 1 year, or disqualification from office.

# Moreover ...



Following this summer's powerful **el Niño** event in the Pacific, some observers are forecasting a **harsh winter for Scotland** this year. To prevent 'large and deep profiled tiles and snow' sliding from its pitched roof onto pedestrians below, the Northern Lighthouse Board plans to attach steel guard rails to the slates of **84 George St** (24/03421/LBC). The proposed installation has been chosen to avoid physical and minimise visual impacts.

In Aug 2021, the Council began an initiative to plant **1m trees by 2030**, aiming to become carbon neutral. Since then, alongside external parties, it has planted **160,285**, of which an unrecorded number survive. The figures emerged in answers by Culture & Communities **Convener Graham** (Ward 11) to questions from Cllr McKay last month. To make target, given a sapling failure rate of at least 2%, we estimate **over 171,956** trees remain to be planted each year until 2030/31. **Spurtle** admires such heroic ambition.

Responding to a petition last month, members of the **Transport & Environment Cmte** called for a report on the need for and cost of installing **ground anchors** to help secure motorcycles in city-centre Solo/MC bays. **Cllrs Mowat** (Ward 11) and Cuthbert (Ward 8) said theft of high-value MCs and **antisocial use** of them afterwards are a growing problem for residents and visitors alike. In response to a **separate petition**, Cllr Booth (Ward 13) led the way in resisting calls to reconsider the Nov 2018 **ban on A-boards** (Issue 280). T&E agreed to call for a report reviewing **charges for outdoor-seating licences** and benchmarking them against those in other cities. After 2 years, New Town & Broughton Community Council still awaits a response to its concerns about whether the current **minimum 1.5m unobstructed clearance** for pedestrians passing outdoor tables and chairs is sufficient at busy choke points such as the top of **Leith St** (Issue 344).

Council officials have recently received requests to remove cones from statues in **Parliament Sq, W Parliament Sq, Chambers Ct, Coates Cres Gdns and Picardy Pl**. At the latest count, 31 cones have been taken down since mid-July. No record is kept of whether climbers with cones have caused damage, but officials insist Council staff removing the items do not.

**Spurtle 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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## Winter Lectures 2026-27

Robert Adam and Italian artists

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[bit.ly/AHSSadam26](http://bit.ly/AHSSadam26)



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## Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for  
Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith Constituency



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as your local, active, constituency MSP  
(Member of the Scottish Parliament) for  
Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith.

Please get in touch if there's anything  
you'd like assistance with or to discuss  
– issues, concerns, ideas and feedback.  
My team and I are here to help all –  
no matter who you vote for in elections.

Please see below for details of my  
monthly 'help and advice surgeries'.  
These are times when anyone in our  
area can come and speak with me.

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### HELP AND ADVICE SURGERIES

(no appointment is necessary, please just turn up)

#### FIRST Friday of the month:

**2:00PM**  
Craigintony Community Centre  
9 Loaning Road, EH7 6JE

#### LAST Friday of the month:

**11:00AM**  
Out of the Blue Drill Hall  
36 Dalmeny Street, EH6 8RG

- AND -

**3:30PM**  
Piershill Library  
30 Piershill Terrace, EH8 7BQ

**3:30PM**  
Leith Library  
28-30 Ferry Road, EH6 4AE

I serve and represent

Leith, Western Harbour, Piling, Bellevue, Hillside, Easter Road, Abbeyhill, Meadowbank, Restalrig, Lochend, Loganlea,  
Maroonville, Willowbrae, Abercorn, Northfield, Piershill, Seafield, Craigintony, Mountcastle, Duddingston, Holyrood Park

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