

Spurtle



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No 263

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

CEC ELECTION RESULTS

The following (Spurtleshire) candidates were elected as councillors on 4 May.

City Centre: Joanna Mowat (Con) 32.7%; Alasdair Rankin (SNP) 25.1%; Claire Miller (Grn) 20.5%; Karen Doran (Lab) 13.2%. **Inverleith:** Max Mitchell (Con) 19.8%; Gavin Barrie (SNP) 19%; Ian Whyte (Con) 17.1%; Hal Osler (LibDem) 16.6%. **Leith Walk:** Susan Rae (Grn) 19.7%; Lewis Ritchie (SNP), 17.8%; Amy Mneese-Mechan (SNP) 16.6%; Marion Donaldson (Lab) 15%.

The Greens performed well, gaining 2 new seats with Rae topping the poll in Leith Walk. The Conservatives and LibDems made gains at the expense of Labour and the Greens in Inverleith (Nigel Bagshaw a notable casualty). The SNP did likewise in Leith Walk (ousting Labour's Nick Gardner). Labour's share of the vote collapsed across all three wards.

Harald Tobermann was the most successful independent candidate across Edinburgh, securing a 4.1% share of the vote and edging out the LibDems in Leith Walk.

Compared to the 2012 election, % changes in total party shares of the vote were as follows. **City Centre:** Con +5; SNP -0.1; Grn +3.4; Lab -8.1; LibDem +7. **Inverleith:** Con +7.4; SNP -1.2; Grn -14.9; Lab -25; LibDem +6.2. **Leith Walk:** Con +6.3; SNP +5.9; Grn -0.6; Lab -10.8; LibDem -1.4.

Councillors across Edinburgh now number: SNP (19); Con (18); Lab (12), Grn (8), LibDem (6).

In an encouraging endorsement of local democracy, turnout was up on 2012: City Centre 43.7% (+7.1%); Inverleith 56.5% (+8.6%); Leith Walk 44.8% (+8.6%). Whether such gusto survives the non-stop delights of another General Election campaign remains to be seen.

FINAL CURTAIN FOR GARAGE HOME FROM HOME

The case of the garage that isn't a garage on East Scotland Street Lane – but is, whilst also being a dwelling – seems finally to have been resolved (see website 16.6.15).

A Scottish Reporter dismissed appeals by the owner and lessee on 15 May, basically on grounds that 'the use of the building is no longer as a domestic garage and it is being used in a manner [as a domestic dwelling and/or AirBnB] which is consistent with that alleged in the enforcement notice'.

The Reporter requires the original roller shutter to be restored, and internal (external) glazing to be removed within 3 months. All we need now is for CEC Enforcement to screw its courage to the sticking point, hopefully doing so without going through the awkwardly positioned fuse box. See [goo.gl/HCYPGy].

REDUCE ENERGY BILLS

Changeworks and Edinburgh University are running a research project (IDEAL) to look at how smart technology can help save energy at home. They are now looking for households (postcodes EH1-35) with gas combi boiler heating to get involved.

Participants will:

- better understand their home energy use
- get a free Android tablet displaying energy use
- receive tailored advice from university experts
- hopefully save money on gas and electricity bills.

For more information visit [goo.gl/vEFsJN]. To get involved, email your name, address, and contact details to [IDEAL@changeworks.org.uk], or Tel. 539 8610.



BENEDETTI BACKS MUSIC SCHOOL



Photo: Simon Fowler.

Violinist Nicola Benedetti MBE gave a masterclass for 5 pupils from St Mary's Music School in Stockbridge Parish Church last month.

Backing the school's proposed flit to a redeveloped old Royal High School, she said: 'As someone who benefited from a specialist music education, I know how much this can support a young musician's development. If St Mary's Music School were able to move ... its pupils would benefit from much improved rehearsal and performance spaces. The move would also help the school extend its outreach work, which would benefit young musicians across the city'.

Benedetti is the latest in a string of high-profile musicians to back the transfer as part of a 'Perfect Harmony' PR campaign aimed at politicians' hearts and minds. See our website (1.5.17).

SHARED FEARS ABOUT CITY-CENTRE AirBnBs

In the run-up to last month's local-authority election, there was cross-party support for improved regulation of AirBnBs. The hollowing-out of Edinburgh's city-centre population, disruptive party flats in tenements, and untaxed use of public facilities are among the problems many argue should be addressed. But how?

City of Edinburgh Council wants to close loopholes in short-term tenancy rules (e.g. those governing HMOs) and has petitioned the Scottish Government for permission to do so. Andy Wightman MSP wants to exert control via the Planning System's class-uses (making landlords register their properties as businesses). So far, the Scottish Government has said Planning is too blunt an instrument for this situation, and more generally it is weighing up what effects might follow such regulation of the 'sharing economy' of online services and goods which people can let or donate, access, borrow or rent.

There are currently over 1,000 Edinburgh properties listed on AirBnB's website, and well over 100 of them were in Spurtleshire when we checked in early May.



Image: Nita Jatar Kulkarni [goo.gl/hom4CY].

Briefly

Peter Stubbs [www.edinphoto.org.uk]



Broughton History Society will convene next for its **AGM and Members Night** at 7pm on 12 Jun. The Society's latest **Newsletter** appears here [goo.gl/cF10IQ] and contains an excellent account by Tim Maguire, Sandra Stubbs and John Dickie of the **redoubtable Bill Purves** of Scotland St (1934–2016).

'Icing of charm and marzipan,' as Vergil said: **Sweet Unique** replaces **Joyce's Cake Shop** at the soggy bottom of Rodney St.

Council officials report a **reduction in fly tipping** since introducing new 'bulky uplift' arrangements. Bulky staff will now **uplift 1 item for £5** (as opposed to the former £26 for 1–6 items). This is an improvement.

Extensive masonry replacement explains the scaffolding on the E London St side of **St Mary's RC Primary School**. Work is expected to continue until August or September.

CEC Forestry has applied for permission to **thin woodland** in the park adjoining Pilrig St by 10%. The intention is to 'aid development of retained trees' (Ref. 17/01899/TCO).

Edinburgh World Heritage is running guided evening walks on 7 Jun and 12 Jul (£8 each for non-members), visiting **objects of historical, heritage and archaeological interest** in the Old and New Towns. Drinks reception afterwards.. For details and to register: [goo.gl/cxKnHa].

Trips to **John Lewis these days** are an adventure as departments change location or temporarily disappear altogether during **refurbishment**. Current works will eventually add **40k square feet** to the store. Martin Perry, Development Director at **TH Real Estate** (responsible for the St James Quarter), addressed **Leith Central Community Council** on 22 May. In the process he accidentally confirmed a **Waitrose branch** will open on Leith St in due course. **You read it here first.**

The former newsagent at 156–58 Dundas St is now **Cattitude Boutique**, raising money for the Cats Protection League: **'Our vision is a world where every cat is treated with kindness and an understanding of its needs'**. Beware cats offering hypnosis.

Artistic future on Abbey Mount

Arts and education trust Out of the Blue (OB) has taken on the Abbeymount Studios to provide space for over 100 artists of all disciplines.

Situated in the former Regent Road School building now accessed from Easter Road, the premises are accessible 24 hours a day, and include workshops with tools and equipment for woodwork, fashion and textile design, ceramics and printmaking. Over a thousand places each year will be available in a range of classes.

OB Manager Rob Hoon says the new studios will add to 'the area's economy, creation of place, and community. It is another example of [OB's] ability to strategically reuse Edinburgh's building infrastructure to establish much needed creative space for employment and participatory educational and recreational activity, to contribute significantly to Edinburgh's vibrancy'.

The scheme, under a five-year lease, was supported by Creative Scotland, Craft Scotland, the Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council and City of Edinburgh Council. Ben Macpherson MSP proposed a motion of thanks to OB in Holyrood.



Warriston Rd housing mostly approved

City of Edinburgh Council is 'minded to grant' planning consent for flats and associated parking, landscaping and infrastructure at 13 Warriston Rd on the site of the former B&Q (Ref. 16/06264/FUL; our website 11.12.16).

Full permission will be given once a Section 75 legal agreement has been drawn up (by October). This contract will concern developer contributions as follows: 25% affordable housing; c.£118k towards Drummond Education Contribution Zone Actions; £23.5k for 4 Car Club spaces; £6k on TROs for pavements, waiting and loading restrictions, and disabled parking places.

New Town & Broughton Community Council likes the plans, and likes the way developers have adjusted them to partially meet locals' concerns.

NTBCC is less convinced by CEC's Transport Department pressing the developers to limit the number of onsite parking spaces to 101 whilst simultaneously making available 180 offsite parking permits for each residential unit. The policy, says NTBCC, is self-contradictory and unfit for purpose.

Community Manifesto 'is just the start'

Edinburgh Northern and Leith Cooperative Labour Party has produced a *Community Manifesto* through consultation with local residents and experts. Its original aim was to inform debate in advance of recent Holyrood and Council elections.

At five meetings held between December 2015 and December 2016, around 160 participants identified four key areas and agreed ways forward:

- *Childcare* should be accessible to all, achieved through better community/Council communication and investment in cooperatives and social enterprises.

- *Environmental* improvements require greater waste reduction, recycling and repurposing, and more green spaces. New funding is needed for clean community energy, public transport and cycling infrastructure.

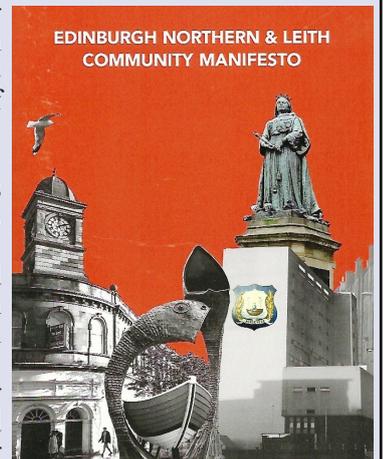
- *Social care* should focus on respect and care for older people via community-led budgeting, more investment in accessible transport and better pay for careworkers.

- *Housing* is often expensive, poor-quality and insecure in the private rental sector. Investment in affordable housing is needed, along with fair-rent regulation and better enforcement of minimum standards. Developers should liaise with locals to shape communities and make use (even if only temporarily) of vacant sites.

On each issue, the first step will be to map or list current provision in order to quantify the challenges.

Critics say the *Manifesto* is long on aspiration and short on action points, but organisers reply their 'Side by Side' project, which has long since outgrown its Labour roots, is a genuine effort to gauge, voice and energise community opinion from the bottom up. They say it's a starting point for public and activists of all political persuasions. It can be extended and improved in future.

To read it online visit [goo.gl/8lpJlo].



Tower of Jewels in potager garden

This remarkable plant magically appeared two years ago at the foot of the great bay tree in the potager garden around the Drummond tennis courts by East Scotland Street Lane.

It is an *Echium* and one of a family of 60 species related to the borage *Boraginaceae*. This is an *Echium pininana* (also called Giant Viper's Bugloss or Tower of Jewels), a native of the Canary Islands. It is columnar, with large evergreen leaves, and can ascend to over 13ft in height. On 20 May it was 10ft and still spearing up into the embrace of the sheltering bay tree.



This specimen has been profusely festooned with delicate blue flowers since 6 May. Clive West, writing in the *Independent* (29.8.08), enthuses: 'It is about as dramatic as anything you'll see in a garden, especially on a clear day when bees swarm on the inflorescent mixture of tiny funnel-shaped flowers proving that non-natives do have a role to play in the bio-diversity of our British backyards'. So we bless the winds for this bestowal, and rejoice with the swifts now 'screeing' again above the rooftops of Scotland Street. — *JRM*

Look out for: Warblers

When we think of great bird migrations it is most likely the magnificent skeins of geese that pass over Edinburgh in autumn to breed in the North, or – a personal favourite – the summer swallows and their cousins the swifts and martins, the traditional harbingers of spring. Both families are noted for their skills in free flight.

Not so our featured family this month: the warblers. These small songbirds are designed to flit almost unseen in thick cover of bushes or reeds. Yet they too make an epic journey on short stubby wings, enticed from as far away as West Africa by our seasonal glut of insects.

Warblers are in fact quite a diverse family, which is obvious when looking at their images in bird books but less so as they go about their secretive business of nesting and feeding. They give our summer dawn chorus a new and exciting variety, the Willow Warbler [goo.gl/E880Ct] and Chiffchaff [goo.gl/FnOYO5], for example, using their powerful songs to stake out invisible territories.

Another species deserving special mention is the Blackcap, described as 'the Nightingale of the North' [goo.gl/aiXiel]. More and more, these warblers are saving themselves a journey by over-wintering in Scotland, relying on the city's bird feeders to survive the cold. Hard to spot but worth the effort, these handsome little sooty grey birds have a distinctive cap, black on the males and a rich chestnut on the females. — *Miles Forde*



Image: Wikipedia, Creative Commons.

No Gormleys till 2018

In August 2015 we reported behind-the-scenes efforts by the National Galleries of Scotland to re-engineer and restore the missing elements of Antony Gormley's *Six Times* [goo.gl/EolzCk]. Curator Julie-Anne Delaney assured us that the four human figures (removed in 2012) would be returned to the Water of Leith at no public cost and without fanfare in 2016. It is now 2017, and only the lack of fanfare has materialised.

Last month we approached Delaney for an update. She told us the delay has been caused by a couple of technical issues identified by engineers. Delaney is now 'very hopeful' the Gormleys will be back in the water sometime next year. Don't hold your breath.

Imam to address Broughton St Mary's

Shaykh Hassan Rabbani, the new imam at Annandale Mosque, will address the congregation of Broughton St Mary's Parish Church during its worship service in Bellevue Crescent on 4 June.

This is a further significant step in a process of growing interfaith dialogue and cooperation between church and mosque over the last four years. There have been visits to services, reciprocal meals and shared readings of texts, and the Food Bank at St Mary's grew from an earlier Muslim project (Feed Edinburgh) to serve food to the neighbourhood's poorest residents.

Shaykh Hassan is a graduate of Al-Azhar University in Cairo and has MAs from Aberdeen and Glasgow Universities. A teacher, researcher and writer, he also delivers the iSyllabus – a groundbreaking programme of Islamic studies – in Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen. For more see [goo.gl/gCJRSy].

The service on 4 June begins at 10.30am, and is open to all members of the community, of all faiths and of none.



Photo: [goo.gl/9qbr1V].

Briefly

Fund raising continues at **Broughton St Mary's Parish Church** on 18 June when, after morning worship, **members of the congregation** will be barbecued by the **11th Edinburgh North East Scout Group**.

SIPO Developments seek permission to build two **3-storey news dwellings** on vacant land in Broughton Place Lane (Ref. 17/01996/FUL).

Since reopening after an **expensive revamp** in Nov last year, the George Hotel on George St has been calling itself **The Principal Edinburgh**. This new name is ridiculous and annoying for many reasons, first and foremost among which is its **meaningless pomposity**. *Spurtle* will continue calling it the George Hotel on principle.

Edinburgh North & Leith candidates in the 8 Jun **General Election** are as follows: Deidre Brock (SNP); Iain McGill (Con); Gordon Munro (Lab); Lorna Slater (Grn); Martin Veart (LibDem).



Katie McMeekan and Michael Ironside have recently made claims for Broughton's **narrowest pavement** (Issues 261, 262). *Spurtle* thinks we can beat both efforts with this footling footway at the west end of Calton Rd. **Can any reader do better?**

CEC's deadline for deciding on the controversial hotel proposal by Duddingston House Properties and Urbanist Hotels for the **old Royal High School (Ref. 16/0558/FUL)** is 20 Jun. Will they make it? It looks increasingly unlikely. In some ways, it doesn't matter since the case will inevitably be called in by the **Scottish Government**. On the other hand, failure to timeously determine such a **high-profile and important** issue would give the impression that Edinburgh's local planning system is **embarrassingly shambolic** ... not for the first time.

Spurtle has been chasing CEC and St James Quarter developer THRE for clarity about **how Picardy Place will be developed**. We want a particulate-free civic space, not a gyratory bicycle-mincer. **Paul Lawrence, CEC's 'Executive Director of Place'** tells us CEC seeks an 'optimum solution' and work is **ongoing**, but 'Pre and post election period means slight delay'. Hmm, doesn't leave many other productive periods, does it? See our website (24.5.17).

An appeal by **JC Decaux** against refusal of planning permission for 5 bus shelters with digital advertisement panels on George St **has been dismissed**. The Scottish Government Reporter's elegant evisceration of the appeal – on the basis of George St's **unique character and unique vistas** – may be enjoyed here: [goo.gl/zsmB3z].

Moreover ...



Congratulations to **Nasim Azad** on her appointment to the committee of **Annandale Mosque**. She is the first woman to achieve such a role in Edinburgh ... so, **congratulations** to Annandale Mosque, too. See our website (16.5.17).

Concerns were raised at NTBCC's meeting last month about **pavement congestion on Leith St**. Due to roadworks, pedestrians are currently crowded onto **one narrow footway**, with pressure of numbers forcing some into the road in front of **long-delayed drivers** running amber lights at Waterloo Place. Similar problems occur **lower down the hill** around café tables, A-boards and the southbound bus stop. **It's an accident waiting to happen**. Pedestrian access *will* be improved during closure of Leith St after the Festival.

By the time you read this, the **Dawson City** atop Waverley Market may be gone. The plywood Irish boozier was erected for pie-eyed enthusiasts attending **Heineken Cup Finals** in mid-May, but was agreed by an official process so opaque that **not even all councillors** yet understand who organised it, how, and **to what public benefit**. Questions are being asked of the **richly textured** and less-transparent-than-Guinness Licensing Board.

Congratulations to **Le Roi Fou**. The Forth Street fine-dinery won as New Restaurant of the Year 2017 at the inaugural **Scottish Food Awards & Academy** ceremony on 7 May. **Artisan Roast** won the Highest Commendation in the Coffee Shop Destination category, as did **Cuckoo's Bakery** for Cakery Destination, **Brandon's of Canonmills** for Breakfast Destination, and **L'Escargot Bleu** for Lunch Destination. The **Water of Leith Café Bistro** won Neighbourhood Bistro of the Year, and **Real Foods** won Ethical Shop of the Year. Fine Dining Restaurant of the Year was **Number One Restaurant** at the Balmoral Hotel. Apologies if we've missed anyone out.

Spurtle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, M. Forde, R. Fullerton, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, S. Michael, M. Orr, L. Rogers, C. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.
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NEW TOWN & BROUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

represents the views of local residents to City of Edinburgh Council.

You're very welcome to attend.

Come along and make a difference at our next meetings
7.30pm, 12 June and 14 August
 Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbcc.org.uk

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LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL



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

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

Next meeting at 7pm on 26 June
 Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates

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f/BenMacSNP @BenMacpherson

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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 EH5 1NF

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