

Spurtle



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Tel: 07455 770474
spurtle@hotmail.co.uk

BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER *Free*

CONTROVERSY OVER FRINGE SHOW AT DRUMMOND

City of Edinburgh Council is using Drummond Community High School as a Fringe venue this month, and one of the events there will be the Shalom Festival (8–10 August).

Event organisers describe it as a multicultural celebration of diversity through music, art, dance and food. It aims, they say, to build bridges and develop international friendship.

Sceptics see it as a thinly disguised celebration of the State of Israel, and one which overlooks the political and humanitarian plight of Palestinians. Until breaches of international law and human-rights abuses are addressed, they say, there should be no 'business as usual' with a celebration of this kind.

Protests outside the venue, as happened at last year's event in Tollcross, are a real possibility. Some fear disruption to school pupils seeking advice from staff once exam results are published.

Neither the school management nor its Parent Council was consulted about the suitability of Drummond for this event. The decision was taken following talks between CEC officials and Police Scotland. They identified it as the most suitable venue on grounds including public safety and security, sufficient space and central location.

Responding to pro-Palestinian activists, CEC Chief Executive Andrew Kerr said 'The Council has clear policies relating to the use of our premises for events and activities, and we have been in detailed discussions with the event organiser to ensure that the proposed [Shalom Festival] programme adheres to these policies'.



EARTHY SET TO FLIT



Earthy will leave Canonmills after the Festival at the start of September.

They're not being forced to leave, and there's no sign that redevelopment of the site is about to start soon.

Rather, director Patricia Stephen told *Spurtle*, the team are going now for commercial reasons. They want to leave at a time of their own choosing, and – in the absence of substantial new investment in the old building – before running the business here efficiently and correctly becomes too difficult.

Earthy's other outlets – in Newington and Portobello – will not be affected, and staff from the Canonmills branch who want to will be able to transfer.

It's not clear at this stage whether Earthy can retain its option to move back into a redeveloped retail space on Canonmills Bridge at some point in the future. No suitable alternative in this area has yet come to light, but they continue to search for and evaluate all opportunities.

Between now and the end of the Festival, Earthy is looking to bid farewell on a positive note by hosting events for local community organisations. The café will be open late with a sociable and sharing menu for August.

'We'll be hugely sad to leave Earthy Canonmills,' says Stephen, 'where we've been welcomed so enthusiastically by all over the last five years and have so enjoyed producing sustainable good food. We're grateful to have, indeed, been Loved Locally.'

BASEMENT PONG AND A SENSE OF WRONG

Long-running problems at 31 Broughton Street are getting worse (see Issue 261).

The smell from decaying rubbish thrown into the basement here by customers of Ladbrokes, Greggs and Café Piccante is atrocious. Nearby property owners are responsible for tidying it up, but – following damage to the stonework by various delivery and bin-lorries – the area is temporarily unsafe and cannot be entered for cleaning as usual.



Nearby residents are appalled. They feel that more should be done to make businesses look after and keep clean the areas in front of and around their premises. Such conditions are laid out in the deeds of domestic property owners, who are convinced similar stipulations must also appear in the deeds of businesses.

Be that as it may, it is obviously the disgusting and thoughtless behaviour of some members of the public which is most to blame. How we begin to reform that mind-set, especially among late-night perpetrators addled by alcohol, is anybody's guess.

City Centre ward's Councillor Doran has again been alerted, as has the New Town & Broughton Community Council.

ENVIRONMENT MINISTER SAYS ENOUGH OF THIS GUFF

Seafeld Sewage Works is over 2.5 miles from Broughton Street, but still occasionally makes its presence smelt. Especially on a warm easterly wind.

The Scottish Government has now announced a strategic review of the plant and surrounding waste-water network with a view to understanding operational and capital solutions for monitoring, reducing and ultimately eliminating the reek.

Edinburgh North & Leith MSP Ben Macpherson, who went with Seafeld residents to meet Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham back in June, described the review as 'a strong and purposeful step'. Expect a report in early 2018.

Briefly



@ClutterMuck used Twitter to point out this sign to the Council last month. ‘No B. Chain for 4+ years, and no school for 10+. That aside, & apostrophes, fine!’ It appears on the cycle path at **Warriston Junction**.

Some kind of work involving **mechanical diggers** began last month on the Sandy Hill site between Broughton Rd and the Claremonts. **Local activists** opposed to the development reported the matter to CEC officials for a possible **breach of planning controls**. They say work should not start here before the developer’s responses to the Reporter’s **conditions for planning consent** have been approved. These concern: (1) proposed sheet piling, retaining walls, and bridging of tree roots; (2) Transport Dept approval of access; (3) noise levels and hours of work. See our website (12.10.16).

The Albany St-based charity **Rock Trust** runs a Nightstop service for young people in Edinburgh and W Lothian. The service offers **temporary emergency accommodation** for vulnerable young people through the help of fully trained and supported **Nightstop Hosts**. The latter offer safe places to stay in their own homes. If you feel you could ‘take in a stranger’, contact [admin@rocktrust.org]. Meanwhile, Rock Trust is taking early registrations (£15) for its 3 Nov fund-raising and awareness-raising ‘**Sleep Out**’ in **Festival Sq**. To sign up go here: [goo.gl/UZDLvK].

A few readers criticised *Spurtle*’s front-page article last month on a scheme to help **rough-sleepers and beggars** in the city centre. They found our language ‘dehumanising’. This was the very opposite of what we had intended. See our Facebook page (14.7.16).

Designs for a new **housing and commercial complex** on the site of the former John Lewis depot in **Bonnington Rd Lane** are to go on show (Issue 260). The pre-application exhibition and consultation (17/03256/PAN) will take place in **McDonald Rd Library** from 3.00pm–7.00pm on 30 Aug.



Welcome to Fed, the new sandwich shop at 2A Forth Street. Bog off to ‘Festival Village’ above Waverley Mall – a **ramshackle cluster** of outdoor bars, food shacks and live stages opened before getting planning consent (Ref. 17/03159/FUL). **This is no way to run a World Heritage Site**. See our website (25.7.17).

Picardy Place – what next?

Spurtle remains alarmed by levels of congestion and fumes on Leith Street at the moment, and would not approach it for love or money on a bicycle. Imagine if Picardy Place were the same.

Concerns about unseen or half-developed plans for a huge three-lane gyratory on a reconfigured Picardy Place continue to air on social media. Some claim to have seen recent proposals, but are vague about when and where.

The most up-to-date and authoritative information we know of appears in a Report to the Council dated 10 March 2016. Items 3.12 and 4.4 mention ‘high-quality’ new public realm here with ‘optimum connectivity’ into the new St James Quarter, and a tram/bus interchange. Item 3.32 talks of putting the potential development site in the middle on the open market.

Appendix E illustrates a frightening ‘Picardy Junction Layout and Interface’ which may be what’s prompting fears of a gigantic bicycle-mincer here. Look for yourself at [goo.gl/JjCAhT]. Our understanding is that these designs are far from set in stone, but we continue to seek clarification.



Billion-pound boost but at what cost?

The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Deal Region will receive £1.1b from regional partners and the Scottish and UK governments over the next 15 years. An additional £5b is anticipated in gross value added.

Headline commitments agreed under the arrangement (announced on 20 July) are: capital funding for the new concert hall in St Andrew Square (£20m); data innovation centres aimed at making Edinburgh the ‘Data Capital of Europe’ (£300m); transport improvements at the Sheriffhall roundabout and across western Edinburgh (£140m); a regional skills programme for disadvantaged groups (£25m); and unlocking strategic housing development sites (£65m).

Across the capital, Scottish Borders, Fife and the Lothians (which, between them, account for 25 per cent of the country’s population) some 21,000 new jobs are anticipated.

Amid all the political optimism and ballyhoo, the Cockburn Association’s chair Cliff Hague struck a note of caution. He welcomed many of the proposals, but noted that almost half the money was targeted at roads, and so could increase traffic and pollution. Where would the housing go, and would it be ecologically friendly? How would politicians ‘ensure growth does not come at the price of destroying the qualities that make Edinburgh such a thriving place?’ He said the Cockburn would keep a close eye on implementation to ensure the city’s character and citizens’ quality of life are not sacrificed to ‘the god of GDP’.

More trees failing in St Andrew Square Garden, warns expert

Nine months after we broke the news about trees ailing in St Andrew Square Garden (our website 8.11.16), the *Evening News* (EN) finally covered the story on 10 July.

Back in November, forestry professional Andrew Heald told us: ‘Crown die back was visible when the trees came into leaf in the spring of 2016. As the report and [*Spurtle*] article highlights, mulching and other soil “decompaction” work might stop the situation getting worse; but the only real solution is a wholesale review of how the garden is managed’.

Heald now reckons as many as 20 oak, sycamore and cherry trees here are purging themselves due to lack of nutrients, oxygen and water. Their roots are ineffective in soil frequently compacted by vehicles, temporary structures and returfing. As a result, several have fewer leaves than normal or none at all.

The EN blithely accepted Essential Edinburgh’s assurance that they were acting on the recommendations of a critical report into the trees’ health. They did not ask how.

If Essential Edinburgh are indeed doing anything useful in this regard, it’s hard to see what. ‘My frustration,’ Heald told the EN, ‘is that because the trees will take a few years to die, no-one is taking responsibility’.

Unaccountably, the EN forgot to mention the original *Spurtle* article. You can find it here: [goo.gl/bm58SG].



Gardens of plenty and delight

Broughton flourishes with an array of remarkable small gardens. Many are at the rear of streets and are known only to a very privileged few who look on to truly magical creations. But one of the most inspiring developments in recent years has been the profusion of doorstep and basement gardens. Just take a dander by the east quadrant of Drummond Place, along London Street, and across to Bellevue Crescent and delight in a mini Botanics experience.

Spurtle has previously extolled Nom de Plume's veritable Eden in Broughton Street—a year-long wonder that lifts everyone's spirits. Christine 'Granny' Thomson's garden plot on Bellevue Place continues to astonish with such an imaginative variety of plants and flowers thrumming in so small a space.

Less exposed, but no less stunning, is an unexpected plot in Broughton Place across the way from Lyon & Turnbull. Flanked by a 'cottage garden' herbaceous border which includes herbs such as mint and bay, here is a certain gentleman's potager showstopper of excellent potatoes, cabbage and rhubarb. There is also a tub of rainwater and a most cheerful black cockerel looking due west.

Fields of dreams? Fields of gold? A green thought in a green shade? Relish Spurtleshire's fields of joy! — *JRM*



Onward and upward (and sideways and down)

A large iceberg of Cool has appeared in Broughton with the arrival last month of Alien Bloc in Dunedin Street.

The former warehouse and chandlery is now home to an indoor bouldering centre where long-limbed, awesomely toned young people scramble up 500 sq m of angled walls with holds colour-coded by difficulty. The emphasis is less on dizzying height than on challenging complexity.

The space is light, calm and colourful. The (surprisingly fresh) air is filled with: ambient music; brief explosions of chalkdust; occasional grunts and squeaks; the rustle of pigtailed and stubble; whatever that noise is a honed buttock makes.

To the untutored eye it looks as if these laconic, unharnessed free-spirits could climb anything, but when they can't and they fall off, what awaits them is deep foam matting. They land with soft flops, like ducklings from tenement roofs, pick themselves up and start again. Oh, to be bendy.

Alien Bloc struck *Spurtle* as attractive, reasonably priced and a really positive addition to this area's leisure offering. Find out more at [goo.gl/MpqwYF].



Time to green Edinburgh's greys?

Broughton resident Fay Young stirred things up last month when she suggested on Twitter that the 'grey cliff' between Bellevue Terrace and Canonmills would be improved by judicious planting.

She's interested by examples of sustainable 'living walls' in London's Mayfair and King's Cross, where green biotecture encourages bird and insect diversity, reduces air pollution, and generally softens and brightens the streetscape. (The example pictured right is in Madrid.)

Her suggestion brought support and brickbats in equal measure. Some said the forbidding masonry discouraged people from visiting Rodney Street. Others claimed there was a good case for guerrilla planting here.

Heritage purists said they liked the uncompromising stone as it was, and it should be retained to encourage precious misery in the community. Pessimists said there was already quite enough greenery poking out of the wall and any more of it might bring the whole lot down in 'crumbling loveliness'.



Image: Wikipedia, Creative Commons.

Briefly

A **melancholy profusion** of floral tributes marked the front steps and common stair of a property on Scotland St late last month. They were left in memory of **Ashley Hawkins**, originally from Barry in Wales, who was killed in a second-floor flat here last Dec. Friends and relatives left the flowers while attending the **trial for murder** of Hawkins's cousin Kieran Davies, also from Wales, in Edinburgh High Court.



Edinburgh University and Changeworks, the organisers behind the **IDEAL research project** into domestic energy use and savings, say they're delighted by the response from *Spurtle* readers (see Issue 263). They hope a repeat mention here will **spur even more interest**. For further information and contact details, visit: [goo.gl/FmfQPN].



Local residents and passers-by were disappointed that the **long-awaited communal bins** newly installed on London St arrived **old, battered and already covered in graffiti tags**. It is, one local suggested to *Spurtle*, 'A clear indication of what CEC thinks of our World Heritage Site'. Perhaps something more like this (**tongue-in-cheek**) prototype for Rome would fit the bill.



Work has begun on clearing the gap site at **Broughton Street Lane**. Eleven terraced mews houses will eventually be built here. The original planning application granted in Sept 2008 (Ref. 07/01631/FUL) was extended in 2014.

Permission has been granted to convert the **Eyre Guesthouse** back into a private residence. The two-storey premises at 5 Eyre Place were built in the 1850s and are **Category B-listed**.

Welcome to **The Long Gallery**, a new 'Art and Business Centre' in the former e-fag shop and fire escape route at **134 Dundas St**.

Moreover ...

We understand CEC's Development Management Subcommittee will consider plans to redevelop the **old Royal High School** as a luxury hotel on 30 Aug. In the event of it being approved and built (unlikely anytime soon) will guests there sleep, what with **massed AirBnB visitors** rumbling suitcases under their windows?

A **large, odoriferous lochan** appeared on 15 July in the middle of **Inverleith Park**, bubbling up from underground and prompting much speculation on the **dietary habits** of Craigleith and Comely Bank residents. It's not clear whether a blocked drain, cracked sewer or corrosive curry were responsible, but the North West Team were **quickly on the job**, keen to resolve the problem before the Foodies Festival here on 4-6 Aug.

In other Inverleith Park news, the **Petanque Club** will be holding a 'taster session' on Sat 5 Aug at 2pm. Taste all you like, but our advice is not to try and **put a whole boule in your mouth**. The Festival Fireworks Concert can be enjoyed from the Park on 28 Aug from 7pm. Bring your own radio.

Royal Bank of Scotland has failed in its bid to access an ATM room by inserting a new steel door in the **Category A-listed, Playfair-designed façade of Blenheim Pl**. Councillors on the Development Management Subcommittee rejected this grotesque proposal.

As **Spurtle** went to press, the **Ross Development Trust's** Board of Trustees was set to announce the **winning design concept** for 'reimagining' W Princes St Gardens on 1 Aug. We'll report online asap.

Edinburgh Council's **Senior Waste Management Officer** Murray Black is on a 'personal crusade' to find and repair **bins with missing lids** in the city. If you spot one, he'd like you to contact him with its **position and, preferably, a photo**: murray.black@edinburgh.gov.uk

This **concise but perplexingly worded** planning proposal appeared on the Council portal last month: 'Class three change of use (restricted) from retail to allow additional seating within the 'Oink' filled roll shop.' We like the idea of an oink-filled shop. Perhaps the customers have tired trotters.

Spokes, the Lothian Cycle campaign, celebrates its 40th anniversary this year and is in optimistic mood. In its summer **Bulletin** (No. 128) it hails the recent local-authority election result since the SNP, Labour and Greens are committed to dedicating 10% of the city's transport revenue and capital budget to cycling. Matched funding comes from Sustrans. See our website (1.8.17).

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.

Post: Spurtle, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ.

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 **Deidre Brock MP**
Edinburgh North and Leith



Regular Surgeries

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Leith Walk: 2nd Friday of the month
3.30-4.30pm, McDonald Rd Library
Stockbridge: 3rd Friday of the month
1-2pm Stockbridge Library
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre: Last Friday, 4-5pm
dbrockmp.scot
Tel: 0131-555 7009
deidre.brock.mp@parliament.uk

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 at 7pm on 21 August
Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library
leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates

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Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



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(no appointment necessary)

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Leith Library
28-30 Ferry Road
Edinburgh
EH6 4AE

Every Friday:
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Pilton Drive North
Edinburgh
EH5 1NF

Contact Ben

Office Address: 34 Constitution Street, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6RS
E-mail: ben.macpherson.msp@parliament.scot
Telephone: 0131 600 0134 or 0131 348 5786
Website: www.benmacpherson.scot

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City of Edinburgh Council.

You're very welcome to attend.

Come along and make a
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Broughton St Mary's Parish
Church, Bellevue Crescent

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