

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER

Free

TOURIST TAX IN SIGHT?



Council Leader Adam McVey last month revealed that CEC's plans are well advanced for a Tourist Tax on visitors to Edinburgh.

The new charge could raise around £15m annually, and may be introduced in spring 2019. CEC would need the Scottish Government's permission for the levy, and must first evidence local support among residents and businesses.

Given the hospitality industry's unwelcoming attitude towards a bed tax (it says tourists already pay extra via VAT), CEC's Chief Executive Andrew Kerr is still considering alternative sources for additional funds. But it is significant that in a report to the Finance & Resources Committee last month he acknowledged 'significant spontaneous support' for a Tourist Tax, with 42% of respondents backing the idea in the recent budget consultation exercise.

Some hope any new revenues will be spent on compensating residents for disruption caused by 4.5 million tourists each year – for example, by improving waste collection and repairing roads and pavements. But Kerr seems set on spending to improve and extend Edinburgh's cultural 'offer', thus attracting more tourists.

There is some balance, though. Talking to the *Herald* on 6 February, McVey promised a cross-party working group 'to actively monitor and minimise the [tourist] impact on citizens, particularly during our busier festival months ... working closely with industry groups and the Scottish Government with a view to tightening up regulation of short-term lets, such as Airbnb'. It's a start.

RITCHIE QUITS SNP AMID STORM

In December 2017 (Issue 269), *Spurtle* reported that Cllr Lewis Ritchie (SNP, Ward 12) had taken an indefinite leave of absence for health reasons. On 9 January, he seemed to be back, reacting on Twitter to online coverage of Drummond-related news.

On 15 February, *Holyrood magazine* reported Ritchie had been suspended from the SNP pending a disciplinary hearing into an alleged fracas during the party's October conference. On 19 February, we learned Ritchie had resigned from the SNP but would continue as an independent councillor. *Spurtle* approached him for an explanation but he did not respond.

On 21 February, the *Evening News* published details about the disciplinary hearing, including two allegations of sexual harassment. Ritchie denied all allegations, but conceded he had a 'drink problem' that had caused 'harm and upset'. Following his resignation of the whip, he will not face a disciplinary hearing and the SNP no longer has the most seats in City Chambers.

The cruellest cuts

Crocheted pleas attached to trunks were not enough to save the trees outside St Mary's RC Cathedral. They were all felled on 12 February, in advance of the bird-nesting season, and the likely start of work on the new gyratory early this month. On Twitter, @fountainbridge memorably described the resulting streetscape as 'sad and desolate'. For local campaigner Peter Williamson's take on how we got to this pass and what locals may do next, see (goo.gl/CBBBVb).



MELLOW BIRDS WILL MAKE YOU ...



There are many wonderful things about the world of Harry Potter, but coffee isn't one of them, it seems. Pictured here is the latest A-board design from Artisan Roast on Broughton Street, one of very few Edinburgh cafés which boasts of J.K. Rowling not having written in it.

THE FLAT CAME BACK



In Issue 270 we covered an apparent lack of progress in applying the enforcement order on a garage sometimes operating as an AirBnB at 8 East Scotland St Lane.

We owe Council Enforcement an apology. Before our ink was dry, they had removed the unconsented glazed frontage of the garage and replaced it with a consented metal roller door. Cue general rejoicings from locals.

Two days later, the owner removed Council Enforcement's metal roller door and replaced it with a new (multi-astragalled), unconsented, glazed frontage. Cue general gnashing of teeth. Locals suspect that the garage is once again occupied.

This is the latest twist in an absurd saga which first came to *Spurtle's* attention back in September 2012 (Issue 211).

Briefly

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will be on 12 Mar at 7pm in Drummond CHS. **Jeff Saunders** will talk about 'Unearthing the Secrets of Warriston Cemetery'. Please keep your dog on a lead.

Paul Lawrence, Edinburgh's **Director of Place**, insisted there was nothing mysterious about the **Growth Accelerator Model** deal when he addressed the Transport & Environment Committee back in Jan. Nevertheless, some aspects of it seem to have confused those colleagues who later referred to contract partners '**Certza Trustees 3 Limited**' and '**Certza Trustees 4 Limited**' in their Report to Full Council on 1 Feb. In fact, the partners are *Cetza* Trustees 3 and 4 Limited. Now, if officers can't even get the spelling right, what else may they have overlooked?

Where do you stand on A-boards? **Amusing and decorative** additions to the streetscape? Or **pavement-blocking trip hazards**? A report on the issue is due to go before the **Transport & Environment Committee** in May.

The **New Town & Broughton Community Council** seek **2 new members**. Apply via their website (goo.gl/ykgqy9) by 12 Mar, briefly stating your **interests and relevant experience**. You must be registered to vote within the NTBCC area (see goo.gl/R1k4c8), and expertise in **websites and/or social media** would be welcome.

Lidl's retrospective application for a vinyl poster at **1 Logie Green Rd** has been rejected and enforced (Issue 270; Ref. 17/05527/ADV). CEC officials said directional signs '**outwith the curtilage of the premises**' are unacceptable, and this sign's **size, position and design** would unacceptably impact the street's amenity.

A 51-year-old man was assaulted near **Broughton St's Phoenix Bar** at around 7.50pm on Sat 3 Feb. He sustained serious facial injuries. **Police seek** a slim, Irish-accented white man in his 50s, 5' 8", wearing glasses, dark jacket and scarf (see goo.gl/tV4CK4). To provide information and/or turn yourself in, Tel. 101 (Ref 3447).

Burnavie Ltd wish to build two 3-bedroom **mews-style dwellings** on a car park behind Eyre Cres at **3 Canon Lane** (Ref. 18/00133/FUL). With a mixture of existing brick wall and contemporary zinc cladding, the proposal aims to be a '**positive addition to the street**', but is in *Spurtle*'s view vanishingly dull.

Local residents who objected to '**unauthorised painting**' (in white) of railings outside the hotel at **14-15 Claremont Cres** are still waiting to receive a reply from CEC's Enforcement after nearly 4 months (Ref. 17/005833/ELBB). The **NTBCC** has backed their complaint, and around 50% of Crescent residents **signed a petition** on the subject in Nov. **Cllr Marion Donaldson** (Ward 12) is chasing.

Uphill struggle for RBS planning proposal

Historic Environment Scotland has objected to Royal Bank of Scotland's planning permission in principle application for the site adjoining Dundas Street, Fettes Row, Royal Crescent and Eyre Place (Ref. 16/05454/PPP).

This means that if City of Edinburgh Council approves the application, it will automatically be referred to Scottish Ministers for reconsideration and a final decision.

HES objected to the proposal's scale and layout, in particular its adverse impacts on the World Heritage Site and on Category A-listed buildings on Royal Crescent.

In this robust response, HES was critical of the developer's analytical depth and clarity in its proposals. HES takes issue with the dominating height of proposed pavilion blocks and their restriction of views.

In Issue 270 we repeated how, in October last year, the developer's architect Matthew Ansell, addressing the NTBCC, appeared to believe the latest revisions would allay HES misgivings over pavilion heights (goo.gl/rSNs3u). He will now be in no doubt that they do not.

RBS's plans have so far attracted some 683 comments, 664 objecting and five in support. The NTBCC objection is available here (goo.gl/cJ96DP).



Priority for Powderhall path plan

A Green Party motion prioritising development of the Powderhall railway line as a footpath/cycleway drew unanimous support from the North East Localities Committee on 19 February.

The route is already safeguarded under the Edinburgh Local Development Plan, but this new move aims to give the proposal extra impetus.

Officers said scheduling work was impossible for now as talks with Network Rail have not yet established the likely extent/cost of repairs (especially to bridges or embankments) or other liabilities or indeed the length of line to be released. (The current best guess is from Powderhall to the Lochend Butterfly.)

Cllr Susan Rae (Ward 12) sees potential for the route to include public art impelled by the area's 'bucketloads' of 'imagination, drive ... ambition and intelligence'. Vice Convener Amy Mcneese-Mechan (Ward 12) said she is '1,000% behind the plan'.

Sustrans may now be approached to fund a feasibility study, and progress will be reported in the NEL Committee's business bulletin in 6 months' time. The Transport & Environment and Finance & Resources Committees will be kept informed.

Time to defend tenement life

Spurtle recently interviewed a local tenant who has lived in the same tenement for over 15 years. Until recently they took the lead in organising all those little jobs on the common stair – such as arranging for cleaners and changing lightbulbs – and their plants here were an attractive feature enjoyed by all.

But then one flat on the stair was sold and began operating as an AirBnB. There followed a huge increase in comings-and-goings, strangers struggling with locks, drunk 'guests' pushing the wrong buzzers and kicking doors. Rubbish was now badly binned and recycling stopped altogether.

The model tenant reluctantly began monitoring who used the stair, on one occasion interrupting a burglar who had somehow gained access to the outside key-box code and let himself in.

When the tenant took their plants indoors for fear of them being pinched or damaged, AirBnB guests complained to their 'host' that the stair no longer resembled the pretty plant-filled photo featured on the website. The host then complained to the tenant's landlord about this removal and about the tenant monitoring the stair. He said it made his guests feel 'unwelcome'.

Thankfully, the landlord dismissed these complaints. But the situation as described is a perfect case-study in how short-term lets can rapidly disrupt community life and sour relations. AirBnB issues sensible guidelines on responsible hosting, but they are unenforceable (goo.gl/YoJHuh).

Since February 2017, Glasgow has effectively banned short-term whole-flat lets on common stairs (goo.gl/4FVW51). Similar regulation of the sector in Edinburgh cannot come soon enough.

Traffic calmer with karma

At last month's NTBCC meeting, the following true story emerged concerning police intervention.

A local resident recently berated two community beat officers monitoring traffic speeds on Royal Terrace. They would never catch anyone by standing so obviously in the middle of the road wearing high-vis jackets, she admonished them. Officers politely explained that, despite such legal obligations, they catch a surprising number of 'numpties' this way. On returning to a different spot on Royal Terrace the next day, the officers soon stopped and cautioned a female driver for speeding in the 20mph zone. Guess who was at the wheel? She was, say the police, 'mortified'.

Drummond at heart of the community

At last month's meeting, the New Town & Broughton Community Council gave a sympathetic ear to Drummond Community campaigners concerned about Gaelic Medium Education's possible arrival at Drummond Community High School. Campaigners explained how the logic of school-roll statistics suggests pupils seeking an English Medium Education at Drummond could soon be squeezed out of their local school if GME were introduced (see Issue 270).



Eloquent appeals followed from the floor. One person urged all present to think beyond educational issues, important though they are. She said this is about the whole community with Drummond at its heart. Everyone should get involved.

Another cut straight to the chase, pointedly urging local ward councillors (two of whom were present) to take note of local opinion, climb off the fence and give explicit backing to Drummond as an EME school.

NTBCC resolved to acknowledge and publicise the Drummond Community campaign. It would seek observer status at the consultation with parents on 27 February, but delay further involvement until (if ever) the Council presents formal proposals.

Look out for: Moorhens

Birdwatching is full of surprises. A strange purple waterfowl with a bright red beak has been seen skulking around Inverleith Pond recently. This was a Water Rail, a secretive member of a family that includes Coots and Moorhens.

The Moorhen gets its name from the word 'mere', meaning water or marsh. It is easily seen, strutting about at the water's edge near almost every pond in Edinburgh. Very elegant birds, their tight waterproof feathering makes them equally happy in water or on land, where they feed on seeds, vegetation, invertebrates and small fish. Despite its black appearance, their plumage shows a range of brown and blue hues on close inspection. Moorhens' short beaks are a combination of strong scarlet and bright yellow, and another tell-tale feature is the two white 'tail-light' flashes decorating the constantly twitching upturned tail.



Image: Tony Hisgett (Wikipedia, Creative commons).

Despite living on water, moorhens do not have webbed feet, instead using their long-fingered green legs to propel them through the water. This does not seem to hamper them. For a small bird they are feisty and happy to mix it with their much bigger neighbours: swans, geese and ducks. — *Miles Forde*

Window on the past

This striking display in the window of Apple Pharmacy in Broughton Street is a cornucopia of pharmaceutical charms.

In the late 20th century, Lindsay & Gilmour operated here, and from 1900 to 1950, No 19 housed John T. Coats & Company, Manufacturing Retail Chemists. Ghostly vestiges of the original signage are visible from across the road (Issue 211).

The fascinating items in today's window were certainly stocked by Coats. Here are weighing-scales, mortars and pestles, and a wooden box with nests of brass weights for processing potions and powders.

Here too are products that have survived into more recent times: Pears soap, Fisherman's Friend lozenges, and the marvellous Proctor's Pinelyptus Pastilles which have 'long been used for loss of voice, and especially valuable for singers, public speakers and actors; the late great Maurice Chevalier was noted for his recommendations of the product'!

An impressive library of 17 books, includes Wootton's *Chronicles of Pharmacy*, vols 1–2, 1910, and *The British Pharmaceutical Code*, 1934.

Also present are two splendid plates, one advertising Mather's Fly Paper for 'poisoning flies, wasps, ants and mosquitoes'. Another print bowl posits 'Taraxacum or Dandelion cocoa, especially recommended to invalids, and to those who suffer from Weak Digestion, and Nervous and Dyspeptic Affections, Flatulency, Distention and Biliary Obstructions, in all cases of which it will be found invaluable'.

Many Broughton Street window displays have caught the eye over the years, but this is surely one of the most inspired — *JRM*



Briefly

From the Feb issue of St Mary's *Broughton Beacon* magazine: 'Steps are now being taken to market and sell properties at 103 E Claremont St and 1 Ravelston Ter. A new manse will be purchased from the proceeds ...'.

City of Edinburgh Council's **Tram Liaison Officer** was due to address Leith Central Community Council on 19 Feb but cancelled at the last moment. He had tripped on a section of **wonky Leith Walk paving**, hurt his leg, and diverted to hospital instead. We wish him a speedy recovery.

Three-and-a-half years after we first reported it (goo.gl/FHSmFV), fitting-out of an Italian wine-café cum super-deli has begun at **118A–120A Dundas St**. *Ulteriori notizie quando abbiamo.*

Eight stone plaques are to be set into the platt of the **Royal Scots Club at 29 Abercromby Place**. They will commemorate members of the regiment who won **Victoria Crosses** during the First World War.

Some **40 people** commented on plans to gut and reface **Canon Mill** (Ref. 17/05967/FUL; [goo.gl/hK9ssy]). Of these, 13 wrote in support of the proposal: a **highly unusual** outpouring of enthusiasm for any modern office solution.

Permission has been granted to demolish **14–16 Union St**, clearing the way for construction of **11 new apartments** (Ref. 17/03996/CON). A link to the existing B-listed tenement at **26 Forth St** will be removed.

Eden's Kitchen at 32C Broughton St has been refused Class 3 status to operate as a restaurant (Ref. 16/05390/FUL). Officials said the applicant had not shown current use could continue without **detrimental impact** on the living conditions of nearby residents (**odour and noise transmission**). Santorini Ltd was originally granted Class 3 restaurant status here in Feb 2006.

Work has begun on returning the **refurbished Ross Fountain** to W. Princes St Gardens. It should be ready by early summer. Jim Mitchell (of Industrial Heritage Consulting Ltd) is Project Conservation Engineer. He says, 'The fountain has been protected by **high tech coatings** which at the same time echo the style of French ornamental work of the period, which emulated **verdigris and patinated bronze**.' Not sure we like the sound of these resonant coatings.

Locals bemused by the disappearance of **decorative wooden panels** attached to the floodgates on Warriston Rd can relax. The easternmost pair below the **Warriston Junction bridge**, carved into poppies, have been temporarily removed for maintenance and painting by **staff at the Lady Haig Poppy Factory**. They're expected back by early spring.

Moreover ...



Before **Leith St** closed last year, NTBCC asked Council officers to **measure traffic levels** on east-west routes through Broughton and the New Town. The idea was to establish a benchmark by which **post-closure rat-running levels** could be judged. Unfortunately, CEC technology failed and **the data was corrupted**. NTBCC now seeks anecdotal evidence of increased or reduced or stable vehicle numbers in this area.

Permission has been granted for a new 3-bedroom three-storey mews house on **Dublin St Lane South** (17/04432/LBC). This, despite objections by the **Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland** regarding height and materials.

As trailed in Issue 269, **Leith Central Community Council** has joined the **Abbeyhill Colonies Residents Association** in calling for an extension of controlled parking from **Pilrig Street northwards** into the Leith Central area. Current problems stem largely from the influx of **commuter cars**. These make it hard for locals to find spaces, and often restrict access for emergency vehicles, Council services, those with disabilities, tradespeople and pedestrians. LCCC and ACRA have now set up an online petition which, if it attracts enough support, **will oblige the Council** to run its **own formal consultation and find solutions**. To sign, visit (goo.gl/emKpyB) or phone/text 07501 586 864 for help. The deadline is 14 April.

STOP PRESS: We were saddened to learn of the death last month of Scotland St resident **Iseabail Macleod**. A distinguished wordsmith and lexicographer (she was editorial director of the **Scottish National Dictionary Association** from 1986 to 2002), Macleod wrote extensively with charm and learning about **Scotland and the Scots tongue**. She was also, for many years, a loyal *Spurtle* subscriber.

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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: 7pm, 19 March 2018
 Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates

Deidre Brock MP
 Edinburgh North and Leith



Regular Surgeries

Leith: 1st Friday of the month
 1–2pm, 166 Great Junction Street
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
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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, Edinburgh EH5 1NF

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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 meeting
7.30pm, 12 March
 Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbcc.org.uk