

Spurtle



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2018**

No 274

Tel: 07455 770474

spurtle@hotmail.co.uk

BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

MIXED RESPONSE ON TRAMS TO NEWHAVEN

Last month, Living Streets, the Cockburn Association, Leith Central and New Town & Broughton Community Councils each issued responses to plans for extending the tramway to Newhaven.

In general terms, they favour the principle of the project. But many very serious reservations include:

- A wholly inadequate consultation process leading to loss of trust in the Council.
- Failure to learn from past mistakes or wait for conclusions of Lord Hardie's Inquiry.
- Likely severe consequences for businesses during construction. Need for meaningful compensation in addition to rates relief.
- Poor streetscape design, insufficient detail, too many loose ends yet to be resolved.
- Lack of detail on future integration with (and effect on) Lothian Buses.
- Prioritisation of trams negatively affects all others, especially pedestrians and cyclists.
- Insufficient pedestrian crossing points.
- Not enough consideration of wider implications for surrounding streets and neighbourhoods.
- Missed opportunity to reduce general traffic on Leith Walk, particularly at peak times.

In the event of a decision to proceed with the extension, many doubt CEC has time, willingness and capacity to substantially improve the proposals or even implement the existing ones to a high standard.

EAST END UPDATE FROM St JAMES DEVELOPER

Interesting points emerged from TH Real Estate's presentation to the NTBCC last month. With the new St James Quarter due for completion in 2020:

- The programme is ahead of schedule.
- Excavation is 60% complete, and rubble-laden lorries rumbling from the site will tail off between now and August.
- Leith Street will reopen before the Festival, as planned.
- Lost or inaccurate plans of utilities have required new exploratory trenches to be dug in Picardy Place.
- Further 'stakeholder engagement' on Picardy Place will follow soon, with animating the central island and positioning the Paolozzis among topics to be discussed.
- Some 42% of retail leases have been finalised, despite a UK downturn in this sector. European retailers find the UK an unattractive prospect at present, but Edinburgh remains a 'powerful draw'.
- THREE has made provision for additional access routes from the new concert hall and General Register House. Civil servants plan to move out of the latter at some unidentified time after the 2021 Census.
- Stained, unattractive Leith-facing elevations of John Lewis are to be beautified. No-one yet knows how.
- The colour and shininess of the 'Golden Turd' signature hotel have been moderated during the detailed Planning process. The turdiness remains.



GROWLS GREET STEAD'S PLACE PLAN



Image from near Stead's Pl by H. Tobermann.

Last month there was a tigerish response to initial 'design ideas' for replacing the red sandstone shops and light-industrial buildings around Stead's Place (our website 2.5.18). Leith Central Community Council, ward councillors and Ben Macpherson MSP oppose the plans.

Most locals we heard at the 2-day PAN exhibition and subsequent LCCC meeting rejected Drum Property Group's plans for: accommodating 500 postgraduate students and housing about 130 other residents in 50 or so affordable homes; and for an Edinburgh University-run hotel and restaurant [bit.ly/2rugCUE].

Aside from concerns about massing, height, materials and a too bland or too incongruous design, opponents (some arguing with more passion than material Planning points), said:

- Students – of whom there are already 'too many' locally – form a transient population and spend little here. They do not participate or have a stake in the community.
- The proposal offers too little sorely needed affordable and social housing.
- The hotel/restaurant element would 'steal' trade from current businesses and offer little back.
- The hotel/restaurant/summer-tourist influx would attract corporate chains to the detriment, exclusion and extinction of local independents.
- The scheme would erode Leith's special character and Leithers' place within it.
- The proposal unnecessarily replaces structures which are popular, distinctive and economically productive.

Aside from claiming that its architecture respects Leith Walk's built heritage, proponents (some arguing with more strategic vision than local engagement) said:

- It's based on an Amsterdam 'student-hotel model', reflecting students' wishes to be better integrated into real life. Postgraduates live more permanently on-site than other students. Of course, they spend locally.
- Well-integrated international postgraduates offer enormous potential benefits for Scotland and Leith.
- Retaining the current sandstone structures is not commercially viable. However, strenuous efforts are being made to retain current commercial tenants in new premises here on affordable terms.
- The design – which also offers considerable greenery, and a safer cut-through to Pilrig Park – matches CEC aspirations for the site set out in 2008.
- Much of Leith's special character has emerged from chronic social deprivation and under-investment. New development promises more jobs and an improved environment.
- Change is inevitable. Trams will likely drive change in Leith far more than students.

Drum Property Group expects to bring forward a detailed planning application this month.

Briefly



The Ingleby Gallery opened in the **Glasite Meeting House on Barony St** last month (our website 12.5.18). It's a welcome breath of fresh air.

The last event of the **Broughton History Society's** 2017–18 session will be the **AGM and Members' Night**, starting at 7pm on 11 June in **Drummond CHS**. Tiaras optional. Boom-de-ays de rigueur.

Leith Central Community Council's petition calling for added parking controls **from Pilrig St northwards** (Issue 269) attracted 329 signatures. It was 'well received' last month by the **Transport & Environment Committee**, which will consider a citywide review in Aug.

A-boards and other forms of **temporary advertising** will be banned across Edinburgh from this autumn. We'll miss the **wit and creativity** A-boards can bring, but not the trip hazards they present, particularly to the blind. We also welcome the Coalition's renewed commitment to removing **'street clutter'**, including, we trust, the Council's own triangular, lamppost-mounted information blots.

Inquiry sessions into the appeal against rejection of plans for the **old Royal High School** will start on 18 September (indoors) at **Tynecastle Stadium**. They are expected to last around 5 weeks. The public may attend in person, or **watch live online** at: [bit.ly/2Fr1lMq].

In related news, the **Cockburn Association** crowdfunded last month to help defray expected c.£40k **legal expenses** in its joint campaign with the **New Town & Broughton Community Council and Edinburgh World Heritage** at the hearing. (They oppose the hotel scheme and favour the **music-school alternative**.) Pledges can be made at any time here [bit.ly/2I3P8w5].

Good news for bicycling readers. Footpaths/cycleways between **Broughton Rd and Warriston Junction**, and across **St Mark's Park**, have been resurfaced to a high standard, affording **considerable relief** to all those with loose fillings or sensitive bahoochies or both.

Police seek a man in connection with a **stabbing and attempted robbery** at Elm Row's Usave on 2 May. See our website (11.5.18).

Congratulations to John and Jean Bremner of **Warriston Ave**, who on 28 June will celebrate their **60th wedding anniversary**.

Clarity sought on Drummond access

Following an instance of vandalism in March (Issue 273), gates to Drummond CHS's playground were temporarily locked out of school hours.

This closure briefly inconvenienced locals who rely on the basketball court and all-weather surface as places to play and socialise. It also perplexed those who remember assurances issued in the early days of CEC and AMEY's public-private arrangement concerning estate management of the newly refurbished school.

For example, Cllr Ewan Aiken (then Convener of Education) told *Spurtle* in December 2003 (Issue 110): 'I want to place on record my commitment to ensuring that access to the playground out of school hours is maximised, as I understand the role the playground has in providing safe space for the community. The need for community access to the playground was not included in the contract. This was an oversight due to the complexity of the task they were engaged in and not in any way an attempt to change the nature and use of the playground by the local community ... It does mean, however, that a change in the contract as signed will need to be negotiated.'

Council officials now have no recollection of such a renegotiation, so *Spurtle* has submitted a Freedom of Information request to establish its date and outcome.

Junction upgrade starts in June

A major upgrade will start on 18 June at the junction of Rodney and Broughton Streets, Eyre Place and Canonmills.

Work on road surfaces, partial footway reconstruction, traffic signal heads and ductings, crossings, lighting and markings is scheduled to last until 13 August.

Carriageway resurfacing will be carried out in the evenings after 7pm, involving road closures, parking restrictions and suspensions of bus stops.

Officials describe the work as 'part of an investment in Edinburgh's roads and pavements for 2018/19'. Sceptics describe it as a just-in-time fix so that the junction can cope with traffic displaced from Leith Walk during likely tramworks

Short-term lets need regulation

A report on short-term lets in Edinburgh has been written by Cockburn Association Chair Prof. Cliff Hague, based on a conference in March [bit.ly/2HYW2Cz].

Overall, the conference recognised the sector's longstanding importance to tourism here, but, with the growth of online platforms, the trade has mushroomed. A 2017 report by Indigo House [bit.ly/2HUKXqd] identified 2,851 entire-home AirBnB listings in Edinburgh in 2016 alone.

Backers say it supports 2,500 jobs in Edinburgh, and annually contributes £87.7M 'visit spend' here and in the Lothians. Short-term lets will aid Edinburgh's tourism strategy to increase annual visits by a third by 2020. Private Residential Tenancy Agreement legislation introduced in December 2017 incentivises landlords to focus on less risky short-term lets over long-term ones.

The CA identifies unregulated 'whole flat lets' as a key problem requiring urgent solution. Negative effects can be:

- not as much affordable housing
- fewer permanent residents, with those remaining facing more work to maintain the building
- threats to physical fabric and community character, particularly in the Old Town
- noise and anti-social behaviour
- non-payment of rates and taxes.

Possible solutions include:

- registering all properties for short lets, with CEC removing permission where problems arise
- granting licences only where properties and landlords are suitable, with CEC able to suspend, refuse or revoke licences.

The CA believes that, in tenements, the consent of other flat owners on the stair should be sought, along with proof of insurance. Short-term lets of more than 90 days per year should require change-of-use planning consent.

Regulatory solutions would require enforcement, supported by legislative change from the Scottish Government. CEC is talking to trade bodies and Holyrood, says the CEC's Regulatory Services Manager Andrew Mitchell: 'Self-regulation appears the most promising short-term route, and further research is needed.'

Donald, where's your tramlines?

It's been a busy time for **President Trump** lately, with initiatives underway on **North Korea, Iran and, possibly, Edinburgh**. This characteristic surge of confidence appeared on **Twitter (5 May)**.



Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

Tram extension to Newhaven will be beautiful, passenger numbers will be huge, much bigger than existing lame duck tram. I may even build the best hotel ever at the end of the line.

Welcome back, Old Friend

We welcome again the marvellous Corstorphine Sycamore in the East Scotland Street allotments. Here, the early May sun illumined its full spring plumage.

As indicated in Issue 252, a sample of these distinctive lemony-yellow leaves was examined in 2016 by a Botanic authority who confirmed the identity of 'our' much-cherished tree. There is one much smaller example near the west entrance to the Botanic.

The forthcoming Broughton History Society *Newsletter* will feature an article by *Spartle's* founding editor John Dickie, who gives a fascinating personal account of one of the original Corstorphine Sycamores in the city. —JRM



Look out for: Sparrow Hawks

Sparrow Hawks breed in June to time their chick rearing with the sudden abundance of inexperienced fledglings. The much smaller male does most of the hunting, his size allowing him to dive and weave through gardens in pursuit of nimble prey.

Up close they are striking birds, with robbers' striped-shirt markings on their chests. The males have a blue/grey back and glaring yellow eyes – this is a bird with a perpetually ferocious expression. Eye colour changes with age and can be almost red in mature males. The female, though less brightly coloured, is up to 50% larger and has no qualms about taking down pigeons and crows.

Sparrow Hawks can often be seen flying high, where their short rounded wings and long tail are distinctive. Alternatively, they fly low and fast, following paths or tree lines, ready to lock onto and pursue any hapless target. Rather than the impact method of bringing down prey, they extend their long thin talons forward of their body to seize a victim. Glimpses of these birds are often preceded by loud alarm calls as local birds dive for thicker cover. — Miles Forde



Wikimedia: [bit.ly/2KLbenW].

Briefly



Cycleway delineators, known as 'kerb splitters' (short stretches of kerbs laid back-to-back, with **collapsible/reboundable bollards** in-between) have been installed on Leith Walk at the junctions with **Pilrig and Brunswick Sts.** The previous unfit-for-purpose delineators ('orcans') were removed in a process which **cycling correspondent** Tim Smith terms 'orcastration'.

Last month we invited ideas on **how to add interest** to the Scotland St Tunnel entrance in **King George V Park**. Reader Jacky Jenkins suggests involving children in 'vertical gardening', as shown by Monty Don on *Gardeners World* (BBC2, 27.4.18).

Ian Mowat has stood down as Chair of the **New Town & Broughton Community Council** after 12+ effective and diplomatic years in post. Taking his place is **Carol Nimmo**.



Scott Smith, until late April top chef at award-winning Norn in Leith, is opening a new restaurant at **36 Broughton St** (formerly Seasons). At the time of writing, he and wife Laura were hoping to open their 'bigger, better and more ambitious' **Fhior (Gallic for 'true')** at the end of May. See @chefsrsmith and @FhiorRestaurant on Twitter for updates.

We were saddened to learn that **James Alexander Adams** of Drummond Place died on 12 May. An art enthusiast and distinguished former marine biologist, Jim also contributed **historical biographies** to the *Spartle* (Issues 167, 180, 182, 193, our website 5.9.12). **He is survived** by wife Betta, daughter Janet and son Richard.

In Issue 273 *Spartle* partly muddled temporary **bus diversions** during the construction phase of trams to Newhaven go ahead. **Northbound buses** will indeed divert via Easter and Bonnington Rds. **Southbound buses** will go via Leith Walk.

A lot of Broughton flames

An interesting collection of five signed letters dating from early 1865 appeared at a Ramsay Cornish auction on Jane Street last month.

They concerned the destruction by fire of Broughton Street's Theatre Royal (between St Mary's Cathedral and Little King Street) on 13 January 1865. Letters from an Edinburgh City Clerk thanked Leith Dock Commission Superintendent Balbirnie for the attendance of Leith's engine and 30–40 firefighters at the blaze. He offered them a reward for their service.

Balbirnie replied: 'Permit me to inform you that the men unanimously decline to receive any payment whatsoever – they naturally feel proud of being in the spot ready and willing to take part in any labour they were capable of, but the idea of pecuniary reward is one they cannot for a moment entertain.'

The 1,700-seat Theatre Royal was the fourth such entertainment house to have burned down at the junction of Broughton and Little King Streets since 1788. On this occasion, six lives were lost [bit.ly/2I2JkCF; bit.ly/2HYpqNd]. Replacement structures subsequently went up in smoke in 1875, 1884 and, for the last time, 1946 [bit.ly/215NgCQ].

NEW FACE IN HADDINGTON PLACE



Meet **Tom Hodges** – possibly **Edinburgh's last typewriter mechanic** and certainly **proud proprietor of Typewronger Books**. Tom recently returned to Edinburgh from **bookselling in London, Paris and Madrid**, and – after pop-ups at the **Croall Place police box** – has now moved to **MacNaughtan's Bookshop on Haddington Place**. Here, in the shop's former gallery space, he will **sell new books with an international feel and an emphasis on small-press and local publishers/authors/artists/musicians**. See our website (1.6.18).

Moreover ...

A proposed change of use from grocer's shop to unlicensed hot-food takeaway at **50 Broughton St** has been refused (17/00629/FUL; Issue 261) on the grounds that it would likely lead to an unacceptable increase in **noise, disturbance, on-street activity and anti-social behaviour** affecting local residents. Some 40 neighbours had objected. Councillors on the Development Management Subcommittee took the decision **against the advice** of officials.

The **Theosophical Society in Scotland** has won planning consent to build a library/meeting-room and create new garden space in a car park on Cumberland St Lane SE. The Richard Murphy-designed **mews-size proposal** was approved despite 16 objections from neighbours (Ref.17/04898/FUL). The TS, a registered charity, currently occupies one floor of **28 Great King St** and lets out the others for office use. In time, it plans to convert the whole of No. 28 back to residential use and **sell all or part of it**. The TS is dedicated to 'the comparative study of religion, science and philosophy and the practice of the Art of Self-Realisation'.

On 7 May, a member of the public witnessed a woman's handbag being dipped on **Queen St** and her purse removed. Police were informed, and traced two men to **St Andrew Sq Gdn**. The pair were arrested, and the purse and other items recovered. Police urge everyone to **take extra care** of possessions during the summer, when **pickpocketing** increases.

Permission is sought to convert the current office at **19 Dublin St Lane S** into a 5-bedroom dwelling with an **extra floor on top** (Ref. 18/01591/FUL).

Longstone Investment Management seeks to **aesthetically and functionally** improve the rear of Category A-listed **32 York Place** by removing a poorly designed 1980s canopy and lightwell (Ref. 18/01701/LBC). The new **frameless glass canopy** to replace it would, however, completely enclose an historic window, modified at some point between 1798 and 1809 to improve lighting in the then studio of artist **Sir Henry Raeburn** (Issue 155).

Residents were sad to note the sudden passing of **Mr Lal**, who with his wife had run the news and convenience store on the corner of **Dundas and Great King Sts** for the past 35 years or more. We send our condolences. After some renovation work to the premises, **Mrs Lal and family** are to continue the shop, and we look forward to buying our lottery tickets there again soon.

Spurtle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, M. Forde, 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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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, 18 June 2018
Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates

graphic design
for small & medium
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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
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

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
dbrockmp.scot
Tel: 0131-555 7009
deidre.brock.mp@parliament.uk

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61-63 Broughton Street
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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, 11 June
Broughton St Mary's Parish
Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbcc.org.uk