

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER

Free

MIXED VIEWS ON TRAVEL CHANGES

The SNP-Labour Coalition in Edinburgh City Council last month proposed wide-ranging temporary measures to promote active travel and public transport over private vehicle use in the city. In particular, they seek safer socially distanced ways to travel across Edinburgh given the new reality of coronavirus.

If carried out after design and risk assessments, the plans Broughton residents will likely notice first include: closure of Warriston Road north of St Mark's Park; an as yet unspecified closure of Arboretum Place; more feet-friendly phasing of pedestrian-crossing lights; installation of a bus gate on or near North Bridge.

Critics of the plans say they were rushed through without proper consultation, partly in a bid to meet Scottish Government funding deadlines. Some have questioned the extent to which certain proposals were genuinely based, as claimed, on formal advice by the Police. Others argued that plans originally drawn up to tackle overtourism congestion were being pushed through inappropriately, using emergency powers available for tackling quite different coronavirus-related challenges.

Inverleith Ward Cllrs Barrie, Mitchell, Osler, and Whyte called for Raeburn Place to be included among areas earmarked for pavement widening.

Similarly, answering a Council call for further fresh ideas, local resident and former MP Mark Lazarowicz argued for a new southbound cycle lane on Broughton Street.

He said the segregated space would be safer for cyclists wobbling slowly uphill, and provide extra room for queuing shoppers and pedestrians to avoid each other on narrow pavements. Not everyone agreed when *Spurtle* floated the idea last month [bit.ly/2WYIj8D], but most (including councillors) seemed in favour. Backers now hope the plan can be realised sooner rather than later.



'DAMN' REBEL BITCH' WITH LOCAL LINK



Image: courtesy of Lyon & Turnbull.

Meet the 13-year-old Miss Mackintosh. This portrait in oil, painted by Allan Ramsay around 1735/6, fetched £6,000 at Lyon & Turnbull's 'Classic Tradition' online auction last month. For a more specific local connection and summary of this redoubtable woman's later adventures, turn to page 3.

TOURISM CAN BENEFIT ALL, SAYS INDUSTRY BOSS

Louise Dickins, MD of the long-standing Dundas Street travel agency, expounded at length last month on the future of tourism in Edinburgh [bit.ly/35ZptkC]. From an insider's perspective, she examined what changes would make the city work better in future for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Dickins acknowledges that overtourism concerns climaxed after the last Christmas Market, but contends common sense can yet bring consensus between the tourism industry and locals to the benefit of both.

She interprets Council Leader Adam McVey's opposition to short-term lets (which she argues have a useful role to play) as an irrational hostility to tourism. Interestingly, others in Edinburgh fear McVey's affection for tourism reflects an irrational neglect of residents (Issue 295). To the *Spurtle*, it appears McVey is a kind of piñata whom everybody whacks furiously in hope of something desirable eventually falling out.

Dickins laments the current Old Town Harry Potter/*Outlander*-themed pastiche, and calls for shops and businesses to serve real residents' needs. Locals must always come first. Similarly, she wants a Christmas Market showcasing quality Scottish products, not tat. She also blames poor Council planning for overcrowded streets, and wants visitors to enjoy quality experiences outwith the city centre, with sufficient public transport to do so conveniently.

Finally, Dickins sees the current pandemic as an opportunity to reflect. Professionals like her 'sincerely hope that when lockdown ends, quality, respect and balance will be at the heart of Edinburgh's tourism strategy so that residents, business and visitors can exist in harmony to enjoy this magnificent city together for centuries to come.'

Meanwhile, in related news, VisitScotland told the *Scotsman* on 12 May [bit.ly/2WVvnzh] that tourism may not resume north of the border until 2021. Recovery will probably be led by domestic visitors. Priority must be given to safe and responsible tourism.

LOCALS KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON LANDMARK CHURCH

Neighbours around St Stephen's Church reacted with alarm on 18 May when they witnessed pews and fittings being removed without warning from the A-listed premises.

They feared theft or heritage vandalism. *Spurtle* quickly gleaned one possible explanation from church users on-site: that the furnishings were being moved while a leak was fixed. But another explanation soon surfaced: that major redecoration was about to start.

Two Enforcement cases were raised on the day, one of which was closed because of 'no case to answer', the other of which remains in place 'pending consideration'.

Further *Spurtle* enquiries have encountered more speculation than provable fact, most of it concerning the track record, current cashflow, and future intentions of owner, entrepreneur, ballet director, former dancer, and developer Peter Schaufuss.

Mr Schaufuss – a man of seemingly limitless charm but not bottomless pockets – acquired the property in May 2017 [bit.ly/3gjRvME]. To the amazement of some, his promised Edinburgh Festival Ballet School opened in September 2019. It currently runs a limited service owing to coronavirus restrictions.



Briefly

STOP

**DURING LOCKDOWN
MEWS RESIDENTS
AND
DELIVERIES ONLY**

THANK YOU

Sign of the times 1. Passive-aggressive residential NIMBY-ism teetering on the extreme? Wait until you see Page 4.

Work restarted on **McDonald Rd Fire Station** on 4 May after construction there was redesignated as essential work. The site is being operated under **Construction Scotland Safe Operating Procedures**, along with bespoke assessments and method statements for **protecting contractors** from Covid-19. Remaining tasks include roof coverings, structural steelwork, and ground-floor concrete retaining walls.

A man **armed with a knife** threatened staff and made off with cash from a shop in **Montagu Ter** on 9 May. He was described as 'white, aged in his early 20s, of slim build, around 6ft to 6ft 2in tall'. He had a black face covering and was wearing a **black hooded top** with the hood up, black trousers and black gloves. **Anyone with information** should call 101, quoting incident 0924 of 9 May, or call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Broughton St Mary's Parish Church seeks listed building consent for **discreet external LED lights** to illuminate the porch and internal toughened-glass lobbies to reduce the amount of **expensively generated heat** shooting out of the storm doors for the benefit of ungrateful heavenly hosts [20/011858/LBC]. **Both proposals seem eminently sensible**. *Spurtle* is less convinced by the desirability of exhibition screens and a hanging TV monitor. **These strike us as intrusive**, unnecessary, and would require the relocation of **thoughtfully positioned** memorial plaques. Why anyone goes to church to watch TV escapes us. They could easily stay at home or visit betting shops.

Lockdown notwithstanding, work continues on representing residents' views to Edinburgh Council on matters of local importance. **New Town & Broughton Community Council's** response to the Choices for City Plan 2030 consultation is available here [bit.ly/3d1PB0V]. **Leith Central CC's** thoughts on the Halmyre St Place Brief are here [bit.ly/3eleAwL]. Both substantial documents merit your attention.

Fed up being stuck in? Visit The Scottish Gallery's '**Great Scots in Isolation**' [bit.ly/2TL15zY]. It's an online exhibition featuring 40 artists' short films responding to lockdown. **A breath of fresh air.**

Immersive inspiration at Inverleith House

After four years in limbo, the Royal Botanic Gardens' Inverleith House will reopen to the public as an art gallery in summer 2021.

An award of £150k from the Outset Contemporary Art Fund will allow it to partner the Serpentine Galleries in London to create 'an immersive installation, activated as a space for conservation collaboration and action'.

Artists (in particular, Keg de Souza, renowned for her investigation of social and spatial environments), scientists, horticulturalists, scholars, activists, entrepreneurs, policymakers, visitors, and local communities will work together.

Their aim will be to tackle the climate and biodiversity emergencies while delivering the RBGE's core mission of 'exploring, conserving and explaining the world of plants for a better future'.

For more detail and helpful links, visit [bit.ly/2yw0IjX].



Ups and downs of lockdown waste measurements

Swings and roundabouts will not generally fit into landfill bins around Edinburgh, but their combination usefully describes the mixed effects of the current coronavirus pandemic on the city's waste uplift service.

We hear from those-who-know that workplace distancing makes operations more complicated for staff, but reduced volumes of traffic mean they can get there more easily.

The quantity of general waste reduced in April and May, but the amount of mixed recycling increased, perhaps as cabin-fevered residents found new ways to fill the dreary hours locked indoors. However, the quantity of glass collected has gone up, perhaps reflecting the 30% increase in alcohol sales, particularly among those struggling to cope with the new obsessions of stir-crazy recyclers in the same household.

In the first week after brown-bin collections restarted, Council staff collected 1k tonnes of garden-related waste – roughly a third of the amount collected in the whole of May 2019. This suggests to *Spurtle* that domestic trees, bushes and lawns are a lot trimmer this year than usual. It will be interesting to see if Edinburgh citizens' barnets and body hair are similarly spruce when we're allowed to resume sunbathing within responsible ogling distance.

Meanwhile, brown-bin customers will receive a permit extension to compensate for the two uplifts missed at the beginning of the crisis.

A time and a place

If you're one of those jittery thrill-seekers who find the current lockdown simply not fraught enough, perhaps you should consider this special time as a challenge and try selling your home.

The Edinburgh Solicitors Property Centre has advice on securing virtual property valuations from its experienced agents, and welcoming prospective buyers into your home for a virtual viewing [bit.ly/3ciXb6M].

Unfortunately, you won't be able to bring your property to market until a surveyor has visited it in person. And even if you have a Home Report already in place, your solicitor probably won't conclude the missives until social-distancing measures have been lifted.

Still not stressy enough? Try varnishing your floorboards in a house full of kids under 10; or borrow a friend's incontinent dog and leave it alone in a room with balloons and a new sofa. Please let us know how you get on.

Council explores new vague

Policy and Sustainability Cmte members considered an Adaption and Renewal Programme at the end of last month, after we went to press [bit.ly/3ghOdJD].

It was intended to steer Edinburgh through and out of the current pandemic crisis, and is based on five elements:

- effective communication and implementation of national public health advice
- use of social distancing and/or digital delivery to reintroduce essential services
- getting to grips with the financial consequences for the Council of coronavirus
- bringing about sustainable economic recovery
- short and long-term Council responses to poverty.

If you think any of that sounds a bit woolly, prepare for an abundance of waffle.

Another idea is to guide the elements using those values which consultees of the recent 2050 City Vision consultation supposedly wanted Edinburgh to stand for: being welcoming, thriving, fair, and pioneering. Which sounds like just the kind of self-flattering guff people normally reserve for describing themselves on dating websites.

Council Leader Adam McVey sees it differently. 'The Adaptation and Renewal Programme report is the first step in building a future that keeps poverty reduction and sustainability in sharp focus', he says. Depute Leader Cammy Day very much agrees: '[This] is a crucial first step in moving us through the current crisis and on towards a "new normal."'

There's little to dislike here, but even less to sink your teeth into. The overall effect is disappointing. Like candyfloss in a haar.

The Colonel on Coburg Street

Born in 1723, Anne Farquharson from Invercauld married the clan chief Aeneas (Angus) Mackintosh in 1741, aged 18. Four years later, neatly straddling the awkward political exigencies of Highland and national life, *he* continued as a 'loyal' government officer in the Black Watch, while *she* raised the clan in support of the Stewart cause. It was an action for which she earned the honorific rank of 'Colonel'.

Shortly after the calamity of Culloden, while sheltering Bonnie Prince Charlie at Moy Hall near Inverness, Anne and guests were surprised by a force of some 1,500 redcoats. Hopelessly outnumbered, Anne and a few retainers famously routed the intruders by calling out from cover the slogans of various clans, fooling the enemy into thinking they faced far stiffer opposition than in fact they did.

Later in 1746 she was briefly detained, and is supposed to have been asked by the Butcher Cumberland for a dance. With customary acumen, she agreed ... on condition that she could select the music. Her choice was 'The White Cockade', a notorious Jacobite tune.

After her husband's death in 1770, Lady Anne moved south to Leith until her death aged 64 in 1787. She is buried in the tiny churchyard off Coburg Street, but no headstone survives and the precise location of the grave is forgotten. For more on her life, see M. Craig's *Damn' Rebel Bitches* (1997) and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).—AM



Photo: DM.

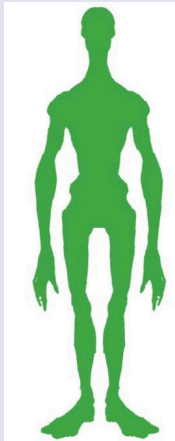
Briefly



Giada Canderle joined the *Spurtle* team last month with the first of her monthly recipes inspired by the **Italian cooking** she learned as a child. Catch up with her Traditional Gnocchi with Butter and Sage Dressing here [bit.ly/3cZvctu].

Good news from Stockbridge. A new children's bookshop – Ginger and Pickles – will open soon at **51 St Stephen St.** (We know because they sought listed building consent last month to change the colour of the front door.) The **original Ginger and Pickles** were of course two creations of Beatrix Potter: a ginger cat and a terrier.

Hackland + Dore's proposal for a tall and skinny residential development to replace its short and deep office at **16 Annandale St** [bit.ly/36joADF] has been quietly withdrawn. **Historic Environment Scotland** said that, in the context of its Category A-listed setting, the **planned structure** was an 'alien building-form' which should be 'strongly resisted'.



Beware! Professional thieves have recently targeted **tenements in Bruntsfield**, posing as food deliverers to gain access. Once buzzed in, they steal bikes from the common stair and head off faster than a speeding pizza.

Police contacted the family of local businessman **Richard Forbes** after a body was discovered near N. Berwick in May. Mr Forbes, owner of the **Smoke Stack on Broughton St**, had not been seen since 18 Mar. Police said there were no suspicious circumstances.

Police Scotland have recorded 100+ incidents between 24 Mar and 18 Apr in which officers were threatened with **deliberate transmission** of Covid-19, or deliberately coughed or spat upon. The **Chief Constable and Lord Advocate** have made it clear that such 'outrageous and disgraceful' attacks will be '**dealt with robustly** by police and prosecution services'. On 12 May, police officers and staff concerned about their health after **coronavirus-related assaults** became eligible for tests, even if asymptomatic.

Reasons to be cheerful: Tulipomania

Here is a snapshot of a marvellous array of tulips in a New Town garden in May.

Compared to pictorial art, there are surprisingly few poems on tulips in English. Perhaps three – by Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, and Alicia Elsbeth Stallings – stand out. Of these, a verse from the lesser known Stallings's 'Tulips' captures the essence and complexity of the flower.

Something about their burnt-out hearts,
Something about their pallid stems
Wearing decay like diadems,
Parading finishes like starts.



Photo: Anna Girling.

The audacious rhymes in this poem are as exhilarating as the flowers themselves.

The plethora of different varieties of tulips in this garden recalls Anna Pavord's magisterial and beautiful book *The Tulip* (Bloomsbury, 1999). It provides a history of the 'Tulip Mania' cult which swept Western Europe from Turkey via Holland in the 17th century, when the tulip and breeding thereof were coveted luxuries, involving vast sums of money. Even now, if you have a perfect ebony-black tulip, guard it like the Crown Jewels!—JRM

Heritage sheik seeks fresh sands

Adam Wilkinson, Director of Edinburgh World Heritage, leaves his post this month after 12 years.

He will thus be in no position to resign if Scottish Ministers eventually consent to the old Royal High School being turned into a hideous top-notch hotel. This is a proposal Wilkinson has vehemently, sometimes controversially, opposed to the delight of many. For the most part, though, his influence has been quietly spoken and diplomatic in style, achieving numerous incremental gains without fanfare or the attention of mainstream media.

His next challenge will come in helping to 'preserve, celebrate and develop Diriyah [Saudi Arabia] into one of the world's greatest gathering places and a globally renowned landmark that celebrates Saudi history, culture and traditions through art, music, fashion and entertainment for guests of all ages'.

Sceptics wonder whether locals there who aren't priced out of their own homes will soon be running for the dunes to escape festivalisation.



Help your trees gurgle with pleasure

Locals are being encouraged to give a lot of tender loving care to their local trees this summer, especially young ones recently planted in urban settings.

McDonald Road is a prime example of where regular watering (they get through 20–30 litres per day) will really help the specimens to thrive.

You cannot overwater these trees, so be generous as often as you can. However much you provide, pour half of it down the aluminium-finish Mona Relief Vente (hole in the pavement), and half over the tree's surface. You can use fresh water from the tap or recycled water from the bath or washing-up bowl. Go on ... make a leafy friend smile.

Moreover ...



More vinegary wit and charm from the smug world of property ownership.

In anticipation of lockdown ending, Elaine at **Barber Road on Broughton St** is offering to cut hair and eventual waiting times by adding customers to a **virtual queue** now. Email her at [barberroad17@outlook.com].

On 16 May, columnist **Kevin Buckle** argued in the *Edinburgh Evening News* that, given all the current talk about **overtourism in Edinburgh**, the 'best possible answer' would be attracting **fewer tourists who spend more**. From this he provocatively extrapolated that 'the time is right for the old Royal High School hotel to get the go ahead'. Whether the **Scottish Govt Reporters** agree with him or not we do not know. They have still to submit their advice to Ministers.

Ever since **emergency local governance** arrangements came into operation in Mar [Issue 294], we have pointed out the potential for abuse by well-meaning elected members seeking **effective solutions to important problems fast**. Claims of such abuse since have not been confined to travel reforms (see Page 1). Last month, accusations were also levelled by **Edinburgh TUC** to the newly hugely influential **Policy & Sustainability Cmte** about the Council's failure to communicate on coronavirus-related crises concerning: poverty/child poverty; future of Lothian Buses; social care provision. Furthermore, the Unite union was unhappy at not being able to present a case on behalf of cab drivers about problems related to closing arterial routes around the capital. See the *Edinburgh Reporter's* **painstaking coverage** here [bit.ly/3glO9J3].

Stockbridge and Leith Markets are now operating in virtual space. You can browse and choose from what's on offer online here [bit.ly/3gbNOBI]. From Sat/Sun evenings to Thursday evenings, place your order, then collect at a **prearranged weekend time-slot** in the real world. (Leith: 11am-3pm, Sat. Stockbridge: 11am-3pm, Sun).

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LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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Next meeting: to be confirmed. For local information, visit the website at

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

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Because of the COVID-19 outbreak my office is currently closed until further notice.

My team and I continue to assist constituents, are available to help as best we can, and can be contacted by phone or email.



The costs of this publication have been met out of parliamentary resources. The SPCB is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.

CORONAVIRUS CORNER

- For definitive NHS guidance on dealing with Coronavirus, visit [bit.ly/2J2dkRh].
- For accurate information on how the Council is responding to the pandemic, visit [bit.ly/398sYFq].
- Factual up-to-date coverage from the Scottish Government is available at [bit.ly/3aa8j5h].
- For useful news on volunteering to help in Edinburgh, visit: [bit.ly/2UBBg3E] and [bit.ly/3dmmQwE].
- And finally, if any reader finds themselves vulnerable or struggling, contact us at the number or email address on Page 1, top-right. We'll seek reliable advice and solutions on your behalf.