

Spurtle



Find us at: www.broughtonspurtle.org.uk



**April
2023**

No 327

Tel: 07455 770474

spurtle@hotmail.co.uk

BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

BUS CAMPAIGN RUMBLES ON

Residents opposing what they say is Lothian Buses' excessive use of E-W residential streets in Broughton and the New Town are continuing their campaign [bit.ly/No326p1].

A WhatsApp group has now been established for affected areas. A combined residents association is also imminent, with one of its first tasks being to organise a petition to the Council's Transport and Environment Cmte. This will demand an immediate and sustained reduction in the number of buses and other heavy vehicles using rat-runs, especially between 7pm and 7am.

Campaigners also seek urgent repairs to the road infrastructure damaged by continuous heavy traffic, and a longer-term plan to deal with traffic management issues, not least around St Mary's RC Primary School.

Speed monitoring was underway on E London St as *Spurtle* went to press. So too was coordinated use of 3 traffic-light sets to disrupt LB timetables. Monitoring of NO₂ levels is planned for the near future, as are counts of how many not-in-service LB vehicles use the E-W route.

A group spokesperson told *Spurtle*, 'Despite ongoing efforts by local residents, councillors, New Town & Broughton Community Council, MP and MSP, Lothian Buses' lack of action is very frustrating. To our minds, it's also unreasonable, particularly now that the trams project is nearing completion.'



NO SHORTCUT TO BECOMING HIS OWN BOSS



Alex Nisbet barbered for 10 years before setting up his own shop on W Annandale St last month. The former Broughton Primary and Drummond Community High School pupil has returned to his old haunts in the bright and airy premises at No. 30. And so far, business at the Eminent Barbershop has grown beyond all expectations, with some clients following him from his former spot in Haymarket and others in the local area finding him for the first time. At this rate, Alex expects to fill another 2 chairs within weeks. It is possible to walk in without an appointment, but to be sure of your snip you're advised to book ahead at [eminentbarbershop.nearcut.com].

CONTROVERSIAL CLUB CONVERSION REFUSED

A revised proposal to convert the former Tramways Bowling Club premises and green at 54 Rosslyn Cres into a private house and garden was refused last month against officials' recommendation [see Issues 305, 307, 316, 325, 326].

The case was problematic. The applicant's agent said the owners intended to allow at least 2 charities and a Stockbridge nursery to use part of the garden for cultivation.

Leith Central Community Council and Pilrig residents lamented the loss of green space and community facilities (the former clubhouse), contrary to Council policies Env 18 and Hou 10. Green space here was already in short supply. If the property (bought for £150k) had residential status, the owner could sell it for over £2m.



Cllr Rae opposed the loss of green space. Cllr Caldwell – who had earlier called for the hearing – favoured reaching a compromise but wondered how to ensure local community access in perpetuity.

Planning officers and a legal adviser said it would be impossible to enforce any condition requiring community access or to draft an effective clause within a Section 75 agreement.

Councillors on the Development Management Subcmte were divided. Cllr Osler wanted to see the green space used, not neglected. Cllr Mowat felt they lacked firm grounds for rejection. Cllr McNeese-Mechan favoured the proposal so long as toilets were provided.

Cllr Booth said loss of community facilities and green space was not outweighed by other community benefits or alternative space elsewhere. Cllr Gardiner argued that separate applications for residential and garden uses would stand better chances of approval in future. The application was refused by 6 votes to 4 with 1 abstention. We expect the applicant to appeal.

STUDENT HOUSING FOR BROUGHTON ROAD?



Last month, startling images emerged on social media of the Broughton Rd Tesco branch swallowed whole by a 6-storey block of student housing [bit.ly/stuhou and bit.ly/ICABRSH].

These visualisations first appeared on the website of London and Glasgow-based architectural firm ICA. ICA has designed student blocks elsewhere in Edinburgh (e.g., Haddington Pl) and hotels (e.g., Virgin Hotel on the Cowgate). The Broughton Rd project was described as 'On the drawing board'. No other details appeared.

Spurtle approached ICA for details. We received no reply and the images soon afterwards disappeared from the website. However, our understanding is that this proposal is real and should be monitored. [See 'Adding up the student numbers', p.3.]

Briefly



June Russell tells us the intriguing glass-walled building behind **64 Broughton Rd** [bit.ly/No326p4] is home to Art So Simple. June and her husband helped design the trapezoid home they now live in, and she runs a small business from the studio beyond, offering beginner classes in Painting and Sculpture. 'As for our new-build,' she says, 'it's been described as an "**architectural triumph**" by some and as "**downright schemey**" by another. The hand-hewn stone (or "**ugly cladding**"), which took stonemasons a year to complete, isn't appreciated by everyone. **Gotta love Broughton!**'

CEC has installed EV charging in **E Claremont St** for exclusive use by Enterprise Car Club clients, excluding pedestrians from part of the footway in the process. To find other locations and advice, visit [bit.ly/e-carbuzz].

Krem Karamel at **68 Inverleith Row** has been refused retrospective planning consent to change from **shop to café** with outdoor seating. Officials said it could have an unacceptable impact on residential amenity.

The Royal High School Preservation Trust entered into a **125-year lease agreement** with Edinburgh Council last month, meaning work on a new home for St Mary's Music School and a public performance venue on **Regent Rd** can start. See [bit.ly/oRHSa].

Plans are afoot to turn the 281m² Sixt car and van rental garage at **27 Dunedin St** into a fitness centre. The prospective new occupant, *Spurtle* can reveal, is the **Undisclosed Gym Ltd** [bit.ly/seeyoupal].

An **alleged assault** took place in a 'road incident' at the junction of **Leith Walk** and **London Rd** on 15 Mar. The pedestrian involved sustained no serious injury, but the **driver has been charged**. A report is going to the Procurator Fiscal.

Apex Property Services' retrospective application to change 9 residential flats to guesthouse use at B-listed **11 Pilrig St** has been refused. Officials said it would harm residential amenity due to increased **noise and disturbance**. As we went to press, No. 11 continued to operate.

On 13 Mar, a nocturnal 'ghost tram' began testing the extended route south from **Newhaven**. Simple fisherfolk who haven't visited Broughton since 1956 cheered as the **experimental vehicle** passed their cottages. Tram spokespeople say a revenue-generating service will start '**in the spring**' ... or June as everybody else understands it.

It never rains but it pours. The owner of 2 A-listed basement flats at **23B Fettes Row** seeks to fit heritage-sensitive flood-prevention doors and use a **modern air brick** to replace the 'solemn air vent' at the back [bit.ly/thoctie]. *Sigh: solum.*

See you in court

Drummond Lawn Tennis Club, established over 90 years ago, seeks permission to erect six 8m-high masts to floodlight the main playing surface at 1 East Scotland St Lane.

Membership has doubled to over 200 since the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. The new lighting would extend available play-time to 10pm (Mar–Nov) – a boon to those who work during the day.

DLTC says that non-reflective surfaces within its boundary, surrounding structures and vegetation, and the restricted beam width of the proposed LED luminaires, mean there would be only limited light spillage into neighbouring gardens. Nearby tenement ground is already lit by street lights in the lane.

DLTC does not address potential racket from evening use of the courts but does note that the unadopted lane adjacent has pedestrian traffic and serves 17 garages/parking spaces. The club argues that its 'strengthening of social cohesion' is a public good and says, 'We do not believe that our proposals constitute a nuisance.'

When the club last applied to erect floodlights in Aug 2022, there were 75 objections and 63 supporting comments. It withdrew the application a month later. The latest proposal (bit.ly/DLTCa) is accompanied by additional product specifications and a technical light assessment. *Spurtle* has been contacted by neighbours saying they weren't notified about this. A decision is expected by early May.



No flagging on snagging

Four community councils raised concerns with the Trams to Newhaven team over design issues in Nov 2022. TtN has now replied. Below we report some issues raised by LCCC and NTBCC.

Regarding staggered pedestrian crossings at Picardy Pl, there were fears that shared use of paving by pedestrians and cyclists outside the Conan Doyle could lead to people straying into the road. There were calls for protection for pedestrians on the island outside the Holiday Inn, where traffic passes on both sides.

TtN replied that current designs follow official guidelines. They denied the island outside the Conan Doyle was shared with cyclists (something no-one had claimed) and said any concerns about Picardy Pl should be addressed to the Council's Active Travel Team. It conceded that any ponding at pedestrian crossings should be rectified 'in due course'.

In response to safety concerns about floating bus stops, TtN said tapers provide 'visual and physical calming measures' aimed at cyclists. It is working on a 'communications package' to educate users.

TtN said the hazardous step on public realm at the Baxter's Pl/London Rd corner could not be evened out. Instead, tactile paving and planters will be installed. Dangers (e.g., for blind pedestrians) posed by continuous footways at junctions will be addressed, in part, by improved signage. A review of 'over-bright' street lighting along the entire tram route will be undertaken with the Council.

The left-turn ban from Leith Walk into London Rd reflects Edinburgh's policy hierarchy favouring pedestrians and public transport. The ban at Brunswick St is under review. Allegedly insufficient 25mm segregation of cyclepaths will be reviewed by the Road Safety Authority upon final completion.

Of 20 problematic areas identified by the community councils, TtN said 19 did not constitute defects. For full details, see [bit.ly/Notaprob].



Tramways

Condensed from the North Briton (14 January 1871).

Tramways are of ancient invention, and have been more or less used in many countries. Of late years they have been largely used for the conveyance of passengers in some of the largest cities of the world, notably in Paris, Copenhagen, Stuttgart, New York and other American towns of importance.

The great objection to tramways in London was that the rail projected above the street, which interfered greatly with the ordinary street traffic. In Birkenhead, such rails had to be replaced by ones corresponding exactly with the level of the road.

The tramway carriage must run in its own groove; it cannot race in order to pass another carriage. Some folks think that tramways would obstruct the traffic, but that is a mistake. In almost every town they have so grown in the favour of the public as to become permanent institutions, and have flourished exceedingly.

The tramway carriages will, as a rule, carry more passengers than an omnibus. The model carriages we have seen are large and commodious, luxuriously seated and well-lighted — there is plenty of room between the rows of passengers, and being on a tramway there is not that jostling and inconvenience one experiences in getting seated in the 'bus.

There can be no doubt that sooner or later we shall have them in this city, and there is no city that we know where such lines of haulage will be of greater utility than they will prove in Edinburgh.—AM [The full version of this article appears on our website, 2.4.23].



Image: Wikimedia Commons.

Adding up the student numbers

Student numbers in Edinburgh have grown fast. Across Edinburgh's 4 universities, Cockburn Association chair Professor Cliff Hague, using Higher Education Statistics Agency figures [bit.ly/HESAEd], says that there were: 38k in 2002; 43.8k in 2011; 57.9k in 2014/15; and 74.7k in 2021/22. That's a near 17k increase in 7 years.

Spurtle doesn't demonise students, and more of them is not a bad thing. But purpose-built student accommodation is unaffordable for many, can crowd out housing for would-be permanent residents, and can lead to disproportionate concentrations of students in residential communities too small to assimilate them.

How many and where?

In the approximate square mile of Spurtleshire there are already 5 PBSA blocks (bdrms in brackets): Beaverbank Pl/Logie Green Rd (346), Haddington Pl (226), Hillside Cres (164), McDonald Rd (139) and Shrub Place (260 + proposed additional 25). Another 3 are proposed for Broughton Rd (?) Dunedin St (131) and Eyre Pl (142).

Spurtleshire is covered by 21 Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics data zones. The 2011 census measured their combined population as c.16k people aged 16+. If that population is about the same today, then the proportion of students in PBSA here is well below the 50% threshold considered excessive under Council guidelines.

Too close for comfort

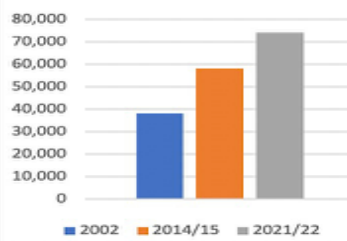
But more localised effects can be dramatic. For example, consider the adjacent SNS data zones containing the Beaverbank and proposed Eyre Pl and Dunedin St PBSAs, all within 300m of each other. These had a combined population of 933 people aged 16+ in 2011. If that figure has remained steady, then the proportion of students occupying PBSAs could soon exceed 66%.

Now, factor in all those (perhaps hundreds of) students destined for Broughton Rd, and those living nearby in other forms of rented accommodation, and it's possible the transient students could soon outnumber permanent residents with significant effects on amenity for the local community.

Be alert

Residents and community councils are alert to such potential problems. Planning officials seem less so when taking at face value the way PBSA developers interpret Edinburgh's internal social/geographical boundaries to best suit their purposes. As one person at last month's LCCC meeting put it: 'Is Edinburgh a city with universities, or universities with a city?'

Number of students in Edinburgh



Briefly



Reader David Adam's letter to us on 5 Mar caused a stir. His photo of tumbled barriers at the corner of **Elm Row and Montgomery St** drew carnivorous comments and 16.8k+ views [bit.ly/badbolls]. *Spurtle* alerted CEC, and the jumble was re-erected **within 24 hours**, ready for another inevitable collapse.

An **independent report** commissioned by NTBCC finds bin-hubs would have '**significant**' **adverse effects** on the World Heritage Site. See [bit.ly/EWHbins].

The new **ESF** dining complex within and beside the OMNi Centre last month plonked an exterior advertising block in pink on **Greenside Pl**. The 3 internally and neon-lit box-letters – measuring 2700 mm x 1500 mm (8.9 ft x 5 ft) – have all the understated charm of Las Vegas show-flamingos gargling shrimps. ESF **didn't wait for permission** before installing them.



Council officials recommend consenting revised plans for a new mixed-use building at **108–114 and 116 Dundas St** [bit.ly/No325p3]. But councillors on the **Development Management Subcmte** say the proposal and public reaction to it merit a hearing. Some fear that, as with the Eyre Pl student-housing application [bit.ly/No326p1], the developer will appeal to Scottish Ministers for a quicker decision. Critics see such tactics as a retrograde step reducing the public's confidence in planning democracy.

At **Broughton History Society's** next meeting on 3 Apr, Dr Alison Rosie will talk about '**The National Register of Archives for Scotland and Community Archives**'. See [bit.ly/BrHSoc] for details. *Fast & Furious* 9 fans: this may not be your cup of tea.

The former Colours Gallery premises at **41 Dundas St** look set to become a **coffee shop/delicatessen** with space for 20 covers. Stand by for Annabelle's Coffee Club.

Friends of Calton Hill launched in the Collective Gallery on 28 Mar [bit.ly/FrnndsCH].

CEC officials refused permission for BT to replace 2 phone boxes with a Street Hub at **272 Leith Walk** (just north of **Balfour St**) and another on **Brandon Ter**. They said they'd have negative effects on conservation areas and neighbouring properties' amenity. Besides, CEC doesn't support digital advertising on **street furniture** other than bus stops.

Short-term lets – progress or potential problems?

When, last year, the Scottish Govt passed a law enabling local authorities to designate 'Short-term let planning control areas', Edinburgh Council immediately announced it would establish one covering the whole CEC area.

The impact of being in a 'control area' is that potential STLs must now obtain planning permission for change of use. Throughout Scotland, there is now also a licensing system for STLs covering matters such as: police checks for landlords and agents; insurance; gas/electricity safety.

To date, only 120 planning applications have been made city-wide since the new procedures came into force on 1 Oct 2022 (around 25 in Spurtleshire). This low number, against a figure of 12k STLs in Edinburgh claimed by some sources, is doubtless because the application deadline for existing STLs has been pushed back from Apr to Oct 2023. There seems little incentive for owners to apply at the moment – the only applications approved have related to aparthotel-type operations where 'residential amenity' of neighbours is not a factor.

Landlords may also be hedging their bets until a legal challenge to Edinburgh Council's arrangements comes to court in May. It is based on the contention that CEC's system is not just a licensing scheme to weed out bad operators and improve the safety of guests, but a way to completely eradicate STLs from the city. Critics argue that the project breaches numerous principles of law.

Is the public right?

Public opinion seems firmly behind expelling all STLs from the city – not just the bad ones. However, some observers wonder why rowdy HMOs on a stair are OK when trouble-free STLs are not. Others suggest the Council finds it easy to blame STLs for 'hollowing out' the Old Town, when poor retail variety there (much of it Council-owned) is another major factor.

And it's worth noting that the current scheme kiboshes not just Airbnb but also useful STLs sought, for example, by people moving to Edinburgh on short-term contracts, or by locals needing a roof when renovating their homes.

Do we in Edinburgh perhaps have an inflated sense of our own city, and of the charm our existence here as residents adds to it?—*Caroline Roussot*. [A longer version of this piece appears on our website, 3.4.23.]



Moreover ...



Reader Gail Clapton has alerted us to this inkpot and quill outside **51 York PI**. We think it originally advertised one of the notaries present here in the 1860s-70s.

Passive grammatical. Work has begun on construction of 48 flatted residential units at **67 Logie Green Rd**. The scheme is marketed as St Bernards in memory of various dogs. **St Bernard's Football Club** played at 2 nearby grounds from 1883 to 1900.

Amid SNP turmoil last month, Edinburgh Northern & Leith MSP **Ben Macpherson**, writing in *Scotland on Sunday* [bit.ly/BMacpSOS], supported more powers for the Scottish Parliament and a **pragmatic, gradual and cooperative approach** to constitutional change. *Spurtle* thinks constituents may be interested but has no comment.

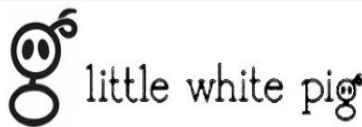
Now that a **Section 75** legal agreement has been reached, **50 Pilrig St** can be knocked down and replaced by a 6-storey block of 9 flats [bit.ly/50PirgSt]. The developer will **contribute £25k** to the Tram Project, £5k fewer than first agreed 10 years ago. LCCC suspects an original miscalculation by **overpressed officials**.

Signs and road markings for a new **Controlled Parking Zone (N7)** began appearing in parts of Spurtleshire last month and more will follow in **Bonnington**. The restrictions themselves won't start till May/June at the earliest. Affected streets in our area so far: **Albert St, Dryden Gt/Gdns/St/Ter, Pilrig Gdns/Hts/St, Rosslyn Cres/Ter**. For information on parking permits, visit [bit.ly/parkpmts].

Completion of the **Powderhall Stables** refurbishment and handover to the managing tenant **Out of the Blue** has been delayed by 'challenges in making the various utility connections' (drainage and power). This and other financial pressures have added to costs, requiring the Council's **Policy & Sustainability Cmte** last month to allocate increased finance for the project (from **£290k to £725.34k**) using the City Strategic Investment Fund. Future rental income will repay the loan.

The A-listed Christian Science Reading Room at **15 Waterloo PI** is entered at ground-floor level from the front and exited by the 4th floor at the back if you use a window. **That's a bad idea**. If the drop doesn't kill you, the pigeons from hell, scunnery fat-pools and mystery excreta in **St Ninian's Row** probably will. With a view to avoiding such worst-case scenarios (and perhaps to stopping pigeons getting in), the proprietor is upgrading **old sash-and case windows** with reinforced modern versions.

Spurtle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, C. Ellis, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, S. Michael, M. Orr, W. Quinn, C. Roussot, E. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith.
Post: Spurtle, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ.
 Printed by Minuteman Press, 63 Elm Row.



Comfortable & friendly bar/kitchen. Open till late.
 Visit us at **26 Dublin Street**, Tel. **556 3036**.
<https://www.littlewhitepig.co.uk>

LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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



Leith Central Community Council

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, Mon. 17 April, Nelson Hall, McDonald Road Library.

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>



Deidre Brock MP
 Edinburgh North and Leith

I'm here to represent you.

Email or call to arrange an appointment at one of my surgeries:

West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre
 Second Friday of the month 2-3pm

Stockbridge Library
 Last Friday of the month 1-2pm

deidre.brock.mp@parliament.uk

0131 555 7009

@deidrebrock DeidreBrockMP



Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



Drop-in Help & Advice Surgeries
 first Friday of every month

9:30 to 10:30
 Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre, 11 Pilton Drive North, EH5 1NF

11:00 to 12:00
 West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre, 19 West Pilton Grove, EH4 4BY

15:30 to 16:30
 Leith Community Centre, 12A Newkirkgate, EH6 6AD

Email: ben.macpherson.msp@parliament.scot
 Telephone: 0131 600 0134

[@BenMacpherson](https://www.facebook.com/BenMacpherson) [BenMacSNP](https://www.facebook.com/BenMacSNP) [BenMac](https://www.facebook.com/BenMac) www.benmacpherson.scot

The costs of this publication have been met from parliamentary resources. The MSP is not responsible for the content of external websites.

Lorna Slater MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region



Foysoil Choudhury MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region



As your Lothian MSP I want to listen, take action and make a lasting difference.

I hold regular advice surgeries for constituents to raise any issue directly, to book an appointment please contact me:

0131 348 6761

Foysoil.Choudhury.MSP@parliament.scot

@FoysoilChoudhuryMSP

@FoysoilChoudhury

foysolchoudhury.co.uk

The costs of this publication have been met from parliamentary resources. The MSP is not responsible for the content of other external sites.



Clear. Direct. Expert advice.

If you need advice from a local Scottish solicitor on

- Personal injury claims (100% no win, no fee)
- Employment law and Tribunal advice
- Civil litigation & Dispute resolution
- Property, landlord & tenant issues
- Debt recovery matters

Call us for a free initial consultation
 0131 235 2426

www.stewartlegal.co.uk

Stewart Legal, Hudson House
 8 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QB