

Spurtle



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2025**

No 347

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER *Free*

EAST LONDON STREET – BUSINESS AS USUAL

Ross MacCallum spearheads E London St residents' efforts to moderate the volume, noise, speed, frequency and timing of traffic there, particularly that of HGVs and out-of-service Lothian Buses between 7pm and 7am.

In a formal complaint to Edinburgh Council on 16 Jan, MacCallum said officials have, for the last 6 years, cited inaccurate noise data and traffic counts when responding to locals' claims about unbearable disruption and its effects on their health.

As evidence, he pointed to the findings of an independent report commissioned by residents from acoustic consultants Sharps Redmore and completed in Dec 2024 (see our website on 1 Feb). It found noise levels here 'clearly higher than the [World Health Organisation] guideline values above which sleep disturbance and negative health effects can be apparent'.



MacCallum calls for the Council's existing data to be discarded and replaced by updated traffic counts. He again argues for tarmac instead of damaged and noisy setted running lanes. He wants an overall traffic management plan to prevent the street becoming a default diversion route during future roadwork projects.

An official from Road Safety Customer Care responded, acknowledging receipt of the complaint. They reasserted the context, results and perceived accuracy of a Council traffic survey carried out in Nov 2023, and the likely timing of a second survey in 2026.

'The fight continues,' says MacCallum.

FROIDE MAIS NON FRILEUSE



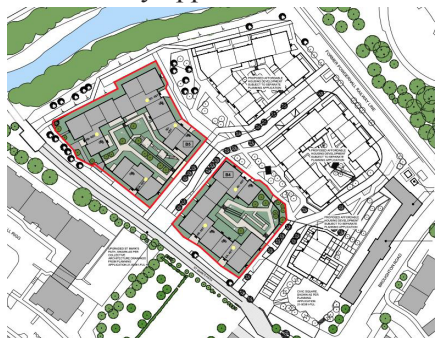
Image: Courtesy of Lyon & Turnbull.

This striking image was estimated to fetch between £2k and £3k at last month's annual Ski Sale, held in conjunction with specialists Tomkinson Churcher by Lyon & Turnbull on Broughton Pl. The poster, dating from around 1940 (a time before windchill and goose pimples were invented), publicised a resort in the Alps still popular today. It is by Karl Machatschek (1906–94), a French artist and photographer who worked under the name Kama.

POWDERHALL PLANS PAUSED

Council proposals for new housing on the former Powderhall waste-transfer site at 165 Broughton Rd have stalled with 2 key applications withdrawn in Dec 2024.

The first sought planning permission in principle for 125 flats in 2 blocks to the north and west of the site (24/06271/PPP). The Council's initial intention was to gain Planning Permission in Principle and then offer the site for development on the private market. Local observers suspect that, in the current economic climate, developers aren't keen to move forward.



The second application, for full planning permission, concerned 3 blocks to the east and south of the site (24/01569/FUL). It was to provide 106 flats and townhouses with associated roads, parking and greenspace.

Spurtle approached the Council for an explanation of both withdrawals and was told that further design work was needed in order for the site to meet the 'required density'. Some believe more homes are required to increase the number of units per hectare from 123/ha to the City Plan 2030 target for this site of 139/ha: an increase in total of 30 units. For a longer article on this subject, visit [bit.ly/165BrRd].

Spurtle later asked the Council for more detail, and the response was well-meaning but vague, like vegetarian haggis. In related news, we're also pressing for sight or synopsis of the Council's tender report on proposed mixed early years/late years development on the former bowling greens adjacent.

PARENTS SEEK FUNDING

Two local parent councils are competing for up to £1.5k funding from Tesco.

Stockbridge Primary School wants an interactive smartboard for digital learning. Broughton Primary School seeks outdoor clothing so that all P1 children can have outdoor learning without financial barriers.

Shoppers can use blue tokens (available at Tesco checkouts) to express a preference. Voting continues until the end of Mar.

Leith Chooses

In a separate initiative, Broughton Primary School's Parent Council aims for a new 'Welcome mural' celebrating their community's rich diversity. Over 40 languages are spoken in the school and nearly half of all pupils come from an ethnic minority. A local artist would work with pupils on the design.

Parents there say the mural would serve as a 'cornerstone for uniting the school with the wider community, and transforming the school into a vibrant, engaging, beautiful environment.' They've applied to Leith Chooses for £3,494.

Elsewhere, parents behind the Leith Runs Together group have Council permission to hold Junior Parkruns in Pilrig Park. The proposed weekly 2km event (on Suns, 9.30am) would be free for children aged 4 to 14, starting in May this year.

Friends of Pilrig Park describe the prospect as a 'fun, inclusive, and great way to get kids active, with volunteering opportunities for older kids and adults.'

You can find out more about both projects at [bit.ly/LeithC25]. You can vote online until 3 Feb.

Briefly



Image: Gerald Wells.

This **Elm Row pigeon** (and 2 other Shona Kinloch creations in the window at Editions Gallery, **Summer Pl**) are among the latest Edinburgh artworks to be dressed for winter. **Adam Smith and Robert Fergusson on the Royal Mile** were adorned with scarves in the run-up to Christmas. Such treatments **provoke different reactions**: some think they're harmless fun, a few consider them a waste of wool. Most reckon they are at least preferable to the **Glaswegian passion** for traffic cones.

Keep Scotland Beautiful has rated **Inverleith** and **Warriston Allotments** 'Outstanding' in its *It's Your Neighbourhood* scheme. They were among 13 Edinburgh-based organisations recognised in Dec for work to improve their communities for **climate, nature and people**.

The Black Cat plans to open a lounge bar and micro-distillery (the latter closed to the public) on two levels at **2-6 Calton Rd** (24/06254/LBC). 'These proposals', they say, 'help to re-establish the tradition of **small-scale, high-quality artisanal distilling craftsmanship** in the centre of Edinburgh'. High-quality artisanal drinkers on a variety of scales across **Broughton and beyond** are thrilled.

We are sad to report the death of **John Bee**, for many years genius of the plaice at Something Fishy on **Broughton St** and father to Daniel who now runs the business. Spurtleshire residents recall his **friendly helpfulness and generosity**.

Veteran *Edinburgh Evening News* journalist, historian and local resident **Hamish Coghill** died last month, aged 88. He retired as **Assistant Editor** in 1996 after 40+ years at the paper. Coghill attended **Canonmills Baptist Church** for many years. Fellow journalist and colleague Ian Swanson's obituary of the man appears at [bit.ly/HCog].

After a successful appeal to Scottish Ministers last month, the owner of **40 London St** can now change the use of the space to short-term rental accommodation for visitors. They have also applied for a similar change of use in the other part of the former **sweat-drenched sauna** at No. 41 (25/00127/FULSTL).

In its 125th year, the **Glenogle Swim Centre** is playing host to 'Your Health is for Life – Great Lengths', an exhibition diving into the history of Edinburgh's **5 Victorian pools**. It will run daily from **7am to 9pm** until further notice. Now see p.3.

Leith Central Community Council seeks a multitasker to take minutes, update the website and handle social media. It pays **£15 per hour** for up to 4 hours per month: chair@leithcentralcc.co.uk.

BT gubbed on Street Hubs

Council officials have refused planning consent for British Telecom to replace 4 phone kiosks with a BT Street Hub outside 117 Dundas St (24/05018/FUL). They said the 'inappropriate design' (including two 1.9m advertising screens) would damage the character, quality and appearance of the surrounding area.

This was one of 30 such applications at sites around Edinburgh. At the time of writing, 23 had been refused on similar grounds (including those at Raeburn Pl and New Kirkgate) and 7 awaited assessment.

One committed resident wrote objecting to them all. He argued:

- Removal of little used, poorly maintained and unsightly phone kiosks should not be contingent upon erection of phone hubs.
- We should not allow the privatisation and visual pollution of public space with street clutter for commercial gain.
- It is doubtful whether people would want to stand in the street to charge their mobiles, or that the BT hubs would offer sufficient Wi-Fi coverage for would-be users
- 'It is clear that BT want to use public space for their private gain and have thrown in a few worthless baubles to try and convince the city that there is some benefit for the public.'

BT says its Street Hubs benefit the public, businesses and councils by providing improved connectivity and increased digital access in high footfall areas of towns and cities.



New deal for Calton Hill

In Dec last year, representatives of the Calton Hill Conservation Trust made a deputation to the Culture & Communities Cmte. They voiced concern about maintenance of the area and supported a proposed Parks Levy on ticketed events there and elsewhere.

CHCT's chief maintenance concerns were litter and wind-boloxed litter bins, footfall-related erosion of grass and soil, and uncontrolled access by private vehicles.

In approving the levy, elected members later resolved to spend money raised on improvement of parks (not on routine maintenance) and to consult and liaise with constituted groups such as the CHCT. Addressing erosion was for the first time included as a 'development improvement'.

In a separate development, Lorna Slater MSP has expressed interest in working with the CHCT to revise the Statement of Special Scientific Interest which shackles Calton Hill to Arthur's Seat.

Finally, for an interesting vegetation survey of Calton Hill, commissioned by CHCT in 2024, visit [bit.ly/vegsvr]. This study, perhaps 'the most detailed botanical survey ever made in an Edinburgh park', was supported by a grant from Inspiring Scotland's Neighbourhood Ecosystem Fund.



Slow progress on cladding

The Housing (Cladding Remediation) Scotland Act 2024 was passed in May 2024 and came into force on 6 Jan 2025. It allows Ministers to assess and fix buildings 'within scope', and to evacuate buildings if necessary. In some cases, they could use these powers without owners' and residents' agreement.

But actual work has been slow coming, say worried householders, who also complain of not being kept informed. Ben Macpherson, MSP wrote to Housing Minister Paul McLennan, MSP in late 2024, seeking more detail. Last month came a written reply which we describe on our website (1 Feb).

In short, an important element of the Govt's response – the proposed Responsible Developers Scheme (RDS) – can't start without preliminary consultation and then secondary legislation. All that takes time, although how much time is unclear. It's a good thing that some developers are already engaging householders in advance of any statutory obligation to do so.

McLennan said improved communication with householders by officials, developers and contractors was in progress. We relay contact links in our online piece.

There is no definitive figure for the number of developments affected by dangerous cladding in Edinburgh Northern & Leith, but 23 'pilot sites' here have been identified for action under the RDS.

Macpherson has been contacted about unsafe cladding by 75 constituents since 2021 (and others before that). They live in around 20 developments, not all of which are included in the pilot scheme.

In Sept 2024, Diamond & Co, a firm of Glasgow-based chartered surveyors, estimated that Scotland had about 5,500 buildings taller than 11m covered in combustible cladding. They estimated some 25,000 people live in such affected high-rises.

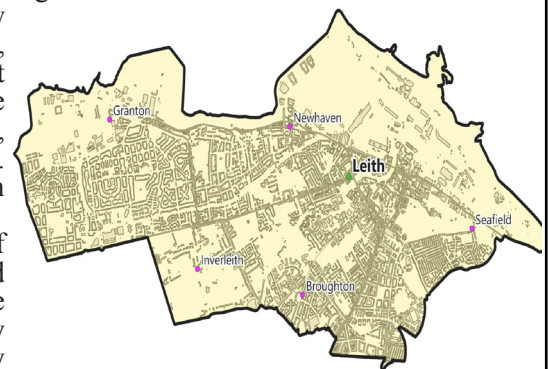


Image: Slaunger [bit.ly/autry].

John Dickie (1941–2024)

John Wallace Bowe Dickie – Broughton community campaigner, political activist, educator, history researcher, writer and editor – died on 28 December 2024, aged 83.

Born on 13 June 1941 in Carnoustie, Dickie was one of 4 children born to Dorothy and Mure, the latter a civil servant. Dickie read History at Edinburgh University and worked first as a teacher for the Voluntary Service Overseas charity in the emerging Malawi of the early 1960s. It was around this time that he met Eileen Keoghan, and the couple married in 1967.

Return to Edinburgh

The pair returned from Africa to Edinburgh with their 2 (soon to be 3) sons, and in 1972 Dickie became the first Community Relations Officer of the Lothian Community Relations Council, helping Ugandan refugees to settle here. He retrained as a primary-school teacher but struggled to find permanent employment. Instead, he began as a historical guide at the Palace of Holyrood House; not an obvious choice for a lifelong republican unwilling to stick to scripts, and one which led to friction with Management.

After running a successful guesthouse with Eileen on E Claremont St, Dickie retired in 1998. A Scottish National Party supporter, he continued to campaign against nuclear weapons, fascism, apartheid, torture, the Poll Tax; and campaigned for global justice, fair trade, gay rights, striking workers, retention of London St Primary School. In 1996 he set up the Broughton History Society, which continues to this day.

Stirred, not shaken

Within these pages, he is most celebrated as the founding editor (1994–2006) of the *Broughton Spurtle*. Dickie set a tone for the paper: determinedly hyperlocal but aware of the broader picture. He listened and gave agency to local people. He wrote with accuracy, concision and disarming modesty. He stuck to his beliefs, embracing controversy when necessary but always with kindness, always with charm, always wearing his gentle and generous heart on his sleeve. He continues to be loved and admired as an active and principled citizen.

John Dickie was, above all, a family man: a devoted son, brother, husband, father and grandfather. A longer appreciation, drawn from the eulogy read at his funeral, appears on our website on 1 Feb.—AM



Briefly



In developments we did not see coming, the **Lookout** and **Gardener's Cottage** restaurants on Calton Hill ceased trading in Dec. So too did Cuckoo's Bakery on Dundas St (and 2 other outlets). It had been in business since 2011, but the owners said **current economic conditions** forced the closure.

Residents in the **Stockbridge Colonies** are petitioning the Grange Cricket Club, calling for modifications to the covered **tennis and padel courts** erected there last year. They say the brilliant white exterior is an incongruous blight on the appearance of the **Conservation Area** and should be toned down. They also call for the fans, which inflate the structures day and night, to be **adequately sound-proofed**. To read more or sign, visit [bit.ly/4g4DVub].

At Dec's Full Council meeting, a motion proposed by **Cllr Caldwell** (Ward 12) and seconded by **Cllr Osler** (Ward 5) called for officers to consider how small electronic items could be included in **communal recycling bins**. The motion, like a portable radio, was carried. Earlier, in an accepted amendment, the Greens drew attention to funding which will allow disposal of tec items in all 29 of the city's public libraries. The scheme will be partnered by the Leith-based **Edinburgh Remakery**.

Issa Mohammed, 30, was jailed last month for **robbery and attempted robbery** in Feb 2024. In the first incident, in Glasgow, he stole a phone and cash after using an **imitation firearm** to threaten a woman. Four days later he used the same method to threaten another woman in **Powderhall Rigg**. He was sentenced to 4 years and 8 months at the High Court in Kilmarnock on 16 Jan.

Police investigating an 'incident' which occurred on **Rodney St** on 14 Sept 2024 issued the photograph of a man they'd like to **know more about**. We published it at [bit.ly/4asLwlg].

Christina Sinclair is no longer Director of Edinburgh World Heritage. The news broke in a **strangely graceless press release** on 13 Jan which made no mention of her service or achievements beyond stating that she had been in **post for 4 years**. There was no explanation given for her departure or indication of her future plans. Some theories circulating on social media we **cannot repeat in print**. Meanwhile, *Spurtle's* formal request for more detail has gone unanswered. **Megan Veronesi**, an EWH trustee and freelance business consultant for charities and social enterprises, has stepped in as Interim Director.

Responsible tourism

The Cockburn Association hosted a conference in Oct last year on 'Responsible Tourism'. A report on it has now been published at [bit.ly/3DXkPsv].

It concludes that the tourism industry must prioritise its host community and engage outside the 'sector echo-chamber'. Tourists should be conscious travellers and guests. Government must establish and enforce regulations and direct levy revenue where it belongs. The local community must engage in these conversations, not only highlighting problems but suggesting solutions.

'Should we all accept these responsibilities, this city that is a good place to visit will remain a good place to live.'

Opening of Glenogle Road Public Baths

Extracted and reduced from the Edinburgh Evening News (8 Sept 1900):—The new public baths in Glenogle Rd, Stockbridge, were formally opened last night in presence of a large gathering by Bailie Telfer, Convener of the Plans and Works Committee of the Town Council.

Before formally declaring the baths open, Bailie Telfer explained that they had to go as far back as September, 1896, in the minutes of the Council, to find when the scheme of erecting baths for Stockbridge was first raised. All the latest improvements had been introduced, and by way of experiment what were known as Russian baths had been established. Turkish baths could also be introduced if required. He hoped the experiment would prove a success, in which case they would be added to. The total cost of the baths would be £18,000.

He hoped the population of the district would take full advantage of what had been put at their disposal and make the baths if possible self-supporting. He then declared the baths open, amid loud cheering. An exhibition of graceful diving, ornamental swimming, and life-saving was afterwards given, and there were also swimming races and an aquatic football match.

From the EEN (10 Sept 1901):—**YEAR'S DRAWINGS AT GLENOGLE BATHS.** Last Sunday being the anniversary of the opening of the Glenogle Rd Baths, D. Watt, the general superintendent, has supplied the following details: Admissions from September, 1900, to 8th September, 1901—males, 53,730; females, 4229; total of 57,959, the total receipts being £647 14s 11d. Mr Watt adds that ladies have only the use of the Baths one afternoon and evening per week (Thursday), and that the above figures compare favourably with the other city baths.



Moreover ...

A Council consultation about Management Rules for **Montgomery St Park** is imminent. This should help determine whether dogs are allowed access in future. The longstanding ban on dogs in this designated **Children's Playpark** was curtailed in May 2023 pending review.

Following sustained and well-reasoned pressure over many months from the **Community Councils Together on Trams** group, there is a small but significant sign of progress towards completing the **Newhaven extension project**. CCTT representatives met the Council's Gareth Barwell (Interim Executive Director of Place) last month. He undertook to compile the first unified list of outstanding defects and to set priorities for **CEC fixing them in 2025**.

The volunteer-run **Kirk House Coffee** has opened on the ground floor of the Bridge Family Church at **12 Logie Green Rd**. It promises 'warmth, community and great coffee together' and offers a 'cozy, family-friendly café ... where every cup feels like home'. Oddly, the vinyl window-mounted adverts face inwards. Service pets only. **Hours: Wed-Sat, 9.30am-2.00pm**.

A new restaurant – **Celestia** – is taking shape at **18 Eyre Pl** and will open next month. The venture has close business links to the award-winning **Cilantro** on **Albert Pl** and will employ at least 9 people. With room for 80 covers plus private dining, the offer is high-end but affordable '**authentic cuisine**' from Bangladesh, prepared on the day. Look out for a full menu by mid-Feb here [bit.ly/clsta].

In Jan, the 3-star **Ibis Styles Hotel** on **St Andrew Sq** became one of 17 Edinburgh hospitality businesses to receive Keep Scotland Beautiful's **Green Key Award** for the first time. The scheme offers 'a comprehensive in-person audit of premises and additional support to help tourism establishments achieve year-on-year **environmental improvements** and reduce climate-change-causing greenhouse gas emissions'. Advice is given on issues including **energy use** in rooms and laundries, **food waste** in kitchens and **how employees work** day-to-day. Worthy as they are, the Green Key Awards do nothing to address harmful emissions caused by **mass aviation tourism**.

Under options being considered to improve efficiency and save money across Edinburgh Libraries, **Stockbridge** opening hours could increase by 2, 3 or 4 hours per week, while **McDonald Rd** hours could reduce by 3, 5, 6 or 7 hours per week. Read more at [bit.ly/4hmcZad].

Draft, non-statutory planning guidelines on **student accommodation** were considered by the Planning Cmte last month (see our website, 30 Jan). A **finalised version** will go out for public consultation soon.

Work has begun on refurbishing the ground-floor flat at **66 Broughton St**. The 2-bdrm property, recently valued at £300k, has long intrigued passers-by with its disjaskit exterior, peeling front door, broken window and a **gnarled yucca** like Yoda starved of face cream and unrefreshed since 1980. Agents Waterman described the dwelling as, 'in need of renovation', 'offering an **exciting opportunity**', and 'giving the new owner a blank canvas to design a modern, yet characterful home to their own tastes and needs'.

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RODNEY STREET BARBERS

Julie 07989 441557, 42 Rodney Street
Tues-Fri, 11am-5pm; Sat, 10am-2pm



Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament
for Edinburgh Northern
and Leith Constituency



As the local MSP for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency my team and I are here to help.

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<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>



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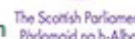
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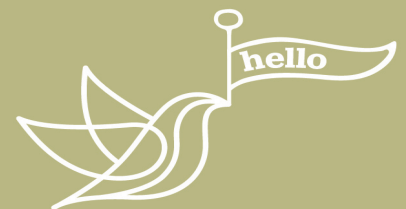
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