

Spurttle



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2021**

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

ROW ABOUT ELM ROW

Proposals for the future design of Elm Row are attracting criticism.

Leith Central CC, New Town & Broughton CC, Living Streets, the Edinburgh Bus Users Group, and Spokes have all voiced concerns, most of which boil down to potential conflict between different kinds of user in this busy and confined space. Pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers will not be safely segregated, they say.

Cllrs McNeese-Mechan and Munn have promised to raise the issues with Transport & Environment Convener Leslie Macinnes, but there are contractual difficulties to amending the designs and a widespread reluctance to do anything at this stage that might delay the tram project.

Objections may have to be shelved for the time being, with refinements (e.g., to the position of bronze pigeons, and the layout/dimensions of footways and cycle lanes) being revisited later.

In other Elm Row news, recent tramwork-related removal of foliage revealed an astonishing accumulation of empty drink cans. *Spurttle* coverage on Twitter stirred no interest among archaeologists, but Council workers were despatched to remove them.



TIME FOR A CHANGE



We thank reader Peter Clarke for this image, captured on a recent visit to London. He wonders whether similar signage would be a useful response to problems often experienced on Edinburgh's busy streets.

WAYS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Community councils (CCs) are often hailed as the first rung of the democratic ladder. But Steve Kerr, chair of the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils, says they have systemic shortcomings which limit their effectiveness.

Last month, he called for CC boundary reviews to reflect the city's growth, with possible caps on size and how many people they represent. They could perhaps correlate with wards, and hold elections in parallel with other ballots. Edinburgh Council officials are reluctant to do this owing to the administrative burden of running two elections at once.

Kerr wants CCs to have more influence on local-authority decision making, rather than reacting to consultations and faits accomplis. They should be better resourced to allow independent and informed representation across a wider range of committees.

He argues Holyrood should reform CCs' legal status, and introduce a measure of compulsion on local authorities to involve and engage with them. He expects the Scottish Parliament's Local Govt Cmte to review arrangements in 2022, and says there is an appetite among MSPs for reform.

Kerr was addressing the November meeting of Leith Central CC, among whose attendees there was strong support for his views.

NEWS FROM UNDERGROUND

The Pilrig Muddle cable wheel unearthed from Leith Walk in the autumn is now being conserved and recorded (bit.ly/3r3g1cw) before going on permanent public display in the neighbourhood, perhaps in Iona St.

Meanwhile, an interesting explanation has emerged for the huge lumps of twisted metal recovered at the London Rd end of Antigua St last month. Trams to Newhaven told *Spurttle*'s Tim Smith that there were two parallel underground chambers here serving the original tram lines. The eastern one was later reused as an air-raid shelter.

The metal structures on top of these chambers were 20th-century roof reinforcement to cope with the weight of the trams and associated infrastructure.

Vlogs on all the tramwork-related archaeology since July 2020 are available here: [bit.ly/32wtEah].



SEWAGE SPILLS ARE NOT THE SOLUTION

Community campaigners are calling on Scottish Water (SW) to invest in stopping the discharge of untreated sewage into the Water of Leith.

They say there are 25 active Combined Sewage Overflows (CSOs) between Warriston and the Shore, but these are not monitored so nobody knows how often they are used. Anecdotal evidence suggests 'exceptional' spillages are growing in frequency, not least because of torrential summer downpours resulting from climate change.

Save Our Shore Leith says discharge of sewage-related debris is 'a potentially dangerous and current hazard', especially since exposed silt is accumulating close to the river's mouth in Edinburgh's most populated area.

SW responds that CSOs are needed to prevent homes and businesses flooding, and says that untreated sewage is already very diluted by the time it reaches the Water of Leith. However, they say they are looking for long-term alternatives.

That's not enough for SOSLeith. Prior to a meeting with SW brokered by Ben Macpherson MSP, they called for SW 'to move from considering sewage pollution as exclusively its problem, instead of looking outward and treating it as a community endeavour to promote green infrastructure'.

In the short term they are calling for immediate electronic monitoring of CSO spills' frequency and duration, with results to be published each year alongside performance targets. They also demand immediate investment in mitigation measures.

Related problems were reported by the Water of Leith Conservation Trust in October [bit.ly/3cAVvrh].

Briefly



Image: Twitter @Hollidge

The scarred and deteriorating condition of **Gayfield's historic streets** drew attention on social media last month. Former road-surfacing professional turned **pothole campaigner** Keith Dixon tweeted an explanation: 'They're roads built for **horse drawn coaches/carts**, foundation probably solid, rolled by 10t steam roller then screeded before bedding setts in with **tar/oil/grit mix** to stabilise & keep surface water out. **Intensity/weight of modern traffic** + ageing of sealant causes cracks/leaks.' Now you know.

Spurtle was not impressed by last month's Council-run **bin-hub information event** for N1 residents [bit.ly/3HFEafc]. We thought the organisation was poor, and the information hard to glean. Follow the link above for maps showing possible hub locations. **You have until 5 Dec to comment.** Meanwhile, parties unknown have appealed to the Scottish Govt against the Council's proposed changes, arguing it should have run an **Environmental Impact Assessment** first.

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will either be the Christmas soirée (13 Dec), or Ian Riches's talk on the **National Trust of Scotland Archives** (17 Jan). See [bit.ly/3kZ6m34] for updates.

A **sterling team effort** saw neighbours clear around 1 ton of dead leaves from **Gayfield Sq Garden** last month. Not everyone approved. *Spurtle* heard one voice questioning the green merits of so many **black bin bags**. The same dissenter said that leaf litter is an insect-rich habitat which should be left in place; something **resident idlers** elsewhere have been arguing for years.

Now that three temporary **accessible car park spaces** have been allocated on site (Issue 311), planning consent has been given for the **Powderhall** nursery/senior housing scheme (21/00382/FUL). **Permanent accessible spaces** will be included in a later phase of development.

Consent has been given to change offices at **1-1A Abercromby Pl** and (separately) **24 Dublin St** into a total of 6 residential flats, with eligibility for 1 parking space each. Locals say there's **too little parking** already.

Out of the Blue will install a locked and heated defibrillator box on the northern side of the Category A-listed **Dalmeny St Drill Hall**. Heritage watchdog **Historic Environment Scotland** found nothing shocking in the proposal.

The long view to 2030

Edinburgh Council has published its City Plan 2030 for consultation. Responses are invited up till 5pm on 20 December [bit.ly/3wrD0ir]. For a downloadable map, see [bit.ly/3wBJBXE].

The Plan sets out priorities for the next 10 years, identifying locations for new homes, businesses, and infrastructure. It also provides policies determining future planning applications.

Below we summarise some stand-out features affecting Greater Spurtleshire.

- Areas earmarked for potential housing, with reference code and number of homes in bold: **Eyre Ter** in New Town Qtr (H16, **245**); former **Jewson's** at 72-4 Eyre Pl (H17, **69**); **Broughton Rd** at Powderhall scheme (H51, **262**); **Broughton Market** (H20, **41**); **E London St** at Waverley Exchange (H21, **41**); **McDonald Rd** (adjacent to Blandfield (H22, **158**); **McDonald Pl** at Batley's cash & carry + drill hall (H23, **152**); **Bonnington Rd** at corner with Pilrig St (H50, **56**); **Broughton Rd** at corner with Gibson St (H19, **23**).

- The Plan acknowledges that additional development would result in a population exceeding the capacity of current general practices in the north part of Edinburgh's North East Locality. A new building will be required. Extra facilities will also be needed for new residents between Leith Walk and Ferry Rd, perhaps on the former Leith Walk tram depot sites.

- Potential infrastructural developments include active-travel links: Powderhall-Leith Walk; Powderhall-Great Junction St active-travel link via Redbraes, Newhaven Rd and Bonnington Rd. Upgraded or new bus services on Bonnington Rd.

- A new 14-class primary school in the Jane St/Bonnington/Pilrig area could require additional capacity for 162 pupils at Drummond Community High School and 290 at Trinity High School. The new school could accommodate 4 additional classes otherwise suggested for Broughton PS.

- Stockbridge, Leith/Leith Walk are defined as 'town centres'. Broughton St, Dundas St, Goldenacre, and Rodney St are 'local centres'.

- New accessible outdoor play facilities are envisaged for London Rd, as are improvements for the whole of Inverleith Park.

Regarding the City Centre, *Spurtle* recommends favouring new 'civic spaces' over outdoor overflow areas for pubs, restaurants, and festival-hospitality pop-ups (p.43). We would note the St James Quarter's capacity to reduce its available car-parking spaces to reflect other City Plan transport policies (pp.186-7), perhaps replacing them with already ducted areas suitable for retail use.

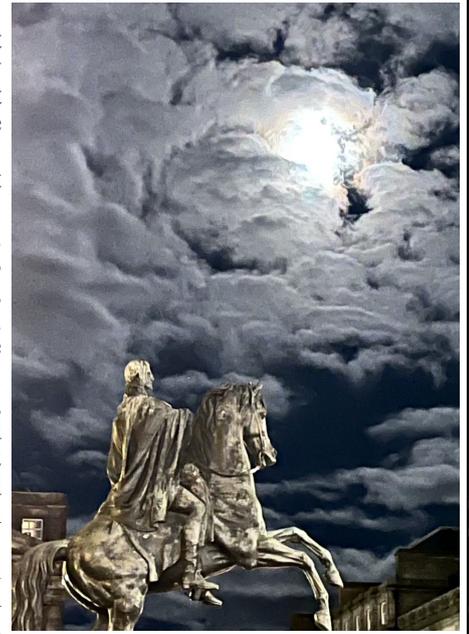


Image: R. Davis

Fresh thoughts on bikes for hire

A Council project team is examining options for a new cycle-hire scheme to replace the one operated by Serco since 2018 but not renewed this September.

Transport for Edinburgh suggests a Council subsidy may be necessary, along with 'clearly defined aims and objectives, the need to minimise opportunities for vandalism of bikes and infrastructure, and integration with buses and trams'.

More effort will be made this time to provide 'adaptive and accessible' bikes, to involve communities, and increase use among economic or socially disadvantaged groups. See [bit.ly/3xenFSs].

Roads bourach blights Broughton

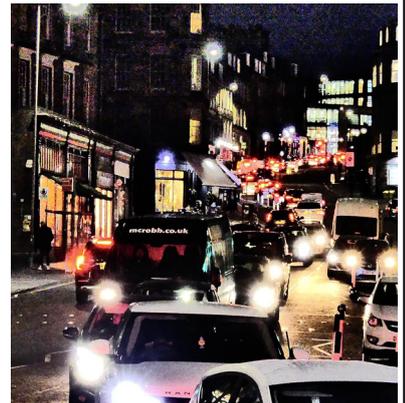
Locals are blaming tramworks for a series of traffic problems in and around Broughton.

Buses using York Place occasional suffer 15-minute delays as vehicles here compete with others on Broughton St to pass through Picardy Pl. Crossing intervals for pedestrians and cyclists have been reduced, much to their annoyance.

Drivers unable to turn left into Broughton St from York Pl, and unwilling to go all the way round the Picardy Pl island are now using Broughton St Lane as a short cut.

Others are rat-running via Gayfield Sq to E London St, using the northern exit which was reopened at the request of the Police here who needed quicker routes when responding to emergencies.

Peak-time traffic on E London St has increased markedly, as have southbound bottlenecks on Broughton St.



Gordon Millan (1946–2021)

On 30 August, we bade adieu to a familiar figure on Broughton Place: Gordon Millan, Professor of French at Strathclyde University (1991–2009).

Gordon was an indefatigable editor and researcher of the works and belle époque of the poet Stéphane Mallarmé and the writer and socialite Pierre Louÿs. Perhaps his greatest academic achievement was the magisterial edition (initially with Carl Barbier) of *Stéphane Mallarmé: Poésies, Vers de circonstance* in 1983. His contributions to French culture and to his chosen period were recognised by the French state with his appointment as an officer of the Ordre des Palmes académiques in 2004.

Gordon was also captivated by dogs. He was particularly intimate with the editor and poet Joy Hendry's rescue dog Stevie (Issue 307). Many a fine conversation they had on Joy's welcoming Broughton Place steps. I am sure Gordon relished Stevie's penetrating aperçus on the Entente Cordiale and growl-worthy issues such as Brexit. Stevie will cherish the memory of his much-esteemed friend and gentleman caller.—JRM



Briefly



Friends of Hopetoun Cres Garden has been selected as one of the Co-op's Community Local Good Causes. If Co-op members choose to support FHCG, **they will earn funds** for the Friends each time they buy Co-op products and swipe their membership card. Follow this link to take part [coop.uk/3oU18qB]. Meanwhile, **Christmas cards** featuring snowy HCG scenes are available (at £5 for 4) from [secretary@hopetouncrescentgarden.org.uk].

New Town & Broughton CC will challenge Edinburgh Council's decision to consent an 18m 5G telecoms mast on **Leith Walk** at **Gayfield Sq** (Issue 312). It says the applicant **didn't notify** enough neighbours, and gave too little consideration to **alternative sites** in a sensitive area.

To most observers' surprise, the Coalition Administration's vaunted (and much criticised) plan for a **Low Emission Zone** failed to pass in late Oct. Seemingly hapless chairing of the **Transport & Environment Cmte** meant a Green amendment passed instead. This places more emphasis on **reducing greenhouse gases, not just NO₂**. A new report will go to T&E in Jan 2022, which may also respond to concerns about the grace period for introduction, and boundary lines and **displaced traffic**. Lessons may be sought from 3 other LEZ schemes under preparation in Scotland. There are fond cross-party hopes that the **original schedule** for implementation can be kept to.

Recent **Westminster controversies** around second jobs for MPs prompted us to look again at various registers of **Spurteshire elected members'** financial interests. We found evidence of enthusiasm for tattoos and the Far East, but no sleaze. Some, however, remain frustrated by Cllr Ritchie's **catering/Council** career-balance. A summary appears on our website (1/12/21).

Edinburgh Leisure proposes reconfiguring the former armoury at the south-west corner of **Warriston Recreation Ground** as storage, loos, showers, and changing rooms for match officials and up to 4 teams (21/05825/FUL). The plans will transform the unlovely and windowless bunker into **a more vandal-resistant** unlovely and windowless bunker, with doors defended by metal shutters.

Picardy Place ambitions

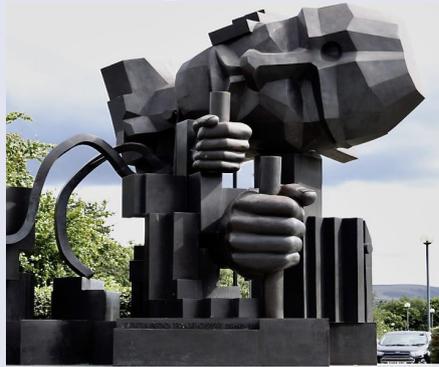
On *Spurtle's* website in November, Cllr Gordon Munro pleaded for Picardy Place's central reservation to be turned into a civic sculpture park once the tramworks beside it are complete [bit.ly/3CDWO3h].

His preference was for another distinguished piece by Paolozzi here, and perhaps an additional plinth for temporary exhibition of other artists' new works.

The idea sparked interest, with over 40 responses in under 24 hours. Some liked the idea of sculpture, but not of another Paolozzi. Some wanted permanent installations, not fleeting ones. Others still called for a public convenience with sculpture mounted on the roof.

Many readers, like Mhairi Scott, called for more trees and foliage. She suggested a ring of rowans to bring natural colour and graceful forms throughout the year and to screen out some of the traffic noise.

Whatever your preference, the future of Picardy Place is too important to let officials call all the shots. We need the long-promised, timely and transparent public discussion *before* decisions are made on our behalf.



Spey Street controversy: Round 2

7N Architects has submitted revised plans for a new house at 17 Spey St Lane (20/04132/FUL). Their previous proposals, submitted in autumn 2020, attracted 1,054 objections and 8 messages of support (bit.ly/3bL7ceP).

7N says the new plans: reduce height and bulk to match nearby buildings; reduce steel cladding in favour of stone wall and slate roof; improve ventilation; and answer questions about bats, daylight, trees, and noise.

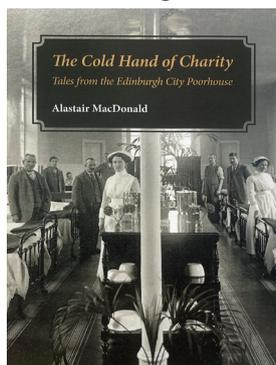
Staff in local businesses remain sceptical, and suspect officials of punishing them for past objections by imposing double yellow lines on both sides of the lane.

Always with us

It has been said that up to one in 10 Scots has had an ancestor in the Poorhouse. Alastair MacDonald's forebears have been inmates, attendants, and even a Board member of the Edinburgh institution, and he now lives in the converted Craiglockart building itself. No wonder he felt moved to research the personal stories of those who passed through its doors after opening in 1870.

Victorian newspapers regularly reported on events and personalities connected with the Poorhouse, and MacDonald's published *The Cold Hand of Charity* is based on those articles from the 1860s onwards. They uncover a history of public philanthropy, medical provision for the disadvantaged, care for children and the mentally ill, and even some entertainment. But there is also a darker side: harsh treatment, religious bigotry, and 'care for the ratepayer'. During the First World War, the inmates' rations were below those recommended for voluntary rationing by the Minister of Food.

MacDonald's aim has been to provide an entertaining account, but also a 'sobering pause for thought'. Readers will, he says, be struck by many resonances with today's debate about poverty and who does or doesn't deserve state aid. For more on its contents and how to order, visit: [bit.ly/3qZ5L53].



Moreover ...



The official unveiling of new (old) lighting in **Scotland St** occurred last month (**Issue 309**). It looks bright, but not ower bleezin, which is brilliant.

6 Picardy Pl will be converted into a restaurant. Anyone who ever dealt with the **Bank of Scotland** here and wondered what Sawney Bean-style cave full of **bleached bones and half-mangled body parts** the Manager emerged from will enjoy explanations offered in plan form here: [bit.ly/2YfHoUP]. We find the **sloping basement** suggestive.

An avian admirer of good design has contacted us to coo over the new **McDonald Rd** Fire Station's projecting boxed window facing **Dryden Ter**. He points to the thoughtful horizontal pigeon perch in the top left-hand corner, and the **downward sloping** exterior stool below for easy cleaning. **If only all architecture** displayed such joined-up thinking.

London-based developer HUB held digital consultations last month about plans for **16 and 23-27 Dunedin St**. (21/05638/PAN). The sites are occupied today by businesses including a **builders' merchant, Alien Bloc, and Yoga Shop**. HUB proposes to redevelop for **residential use** with affordable dwellings, private amenity and open space, and **ground-floor commercial units**. This is the third major residential proposal for the neighbourhood in recent weeks, the others being on **Beaverbank Rd** (also acquired by HUB) and **Logie Green Rd** (Issue 311, p.2). We huv oor doots.

During construction of the BIOMES project, **Royal Botanic Gardens** toilets near the greenhouses will close. Temporary cabin-loos near the East Gate will replace them (21/05670/FUL). **RGBE's Design Proposal** says, 'The courtyard configuration will capture sound and light produced during operation.' **Sound?** Fair enough. **Light?** *Spurtle* had no idea this was possible.

This is the last issue of 2021 and the first of 2022. We **return in print** on 1 Feb, with an online presence continuing in the meantime. We wish all readers a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Spurtle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, S. Michael, M. Orr, C. Roussot, E. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.

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Join us at St Vincent's Chapel this Christmas for traditional services.

Advent lessons and carols, community carols, Christmas lessons and carols, Midnight Mass, Family Eucharist, Sung Eucharist.
All are welcome. Visit www.stvincentschapel.org.uk for times.



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LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL



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 meetings: Monday, 20 Dec, 17 Jan.
Venue/format TBC. For details contact <https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

Trams to Newhaven

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tramstonewhaven.co.uk

Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



Covid-19 Update

Because of Covid-19, and in accordance with the law and advice, my office is closed to the public until further notice. My team and I are working remotely and continue to assist constituents as normal.

Telephone/Video Call Advice Surgeries:

I have also had to cancel my weekly face-to-face advice surgeries. Instead I am holding regular telephone/video surgeries each week. Please leave a voicemail or email my office to book a 15 minute surgery appointment and someone in my team will get in touch to confirm a time. (May 2021)

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NEW TOWN & BROUGHTON
COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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Next meetings:

Monday 13 December, 10 January.

For details contact www.ntbcc.org.uk

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