

Spurtle



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**December
2018**

No 280

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

GEORGE STREET RE-IMAGINED



City of Edinburgh Council consulted on redesigning George Street and the First New Town last month. The consultation continues until 25 January at [bit.ly/2DaUzJZ]. For background exhibition boards, see [bit.ly/2AdPKfL].

The focus is on George Street, with other streets considered principally at the intersections. Main points include:

- Existing layout of pavement – 2 lanes westbound traffic – end-on parking – 2 lanes eastbound traffic – pavement to be replaced by pavement – segregated 2-way cycle lane – 1 westbound and 1 eastbound traffic lane – ‘dwell zone’ – pavement.
- Redesign of major junctions at Castle, Frederick and Hanover Streets: reduced carriageway width, pedestrian desire-lines respected and reduced crossing distances.
- Multifunctional ‘dwell zone’ housing bus stops, loading bays, bench seating, and sheltered ‘pocket parks’.
- To the dismay of some heritage purists, tree planting is proposed to ‘green’, humanise, and punctuate the space. Critics see trees as intrusive clutter, pocket parks as frivolous irrelevancies. Opinion at the *Spurtle* is split.
- As yet, there is little detail on paving or lighting, other than that it will be of ‘high quality’.

Many find much to applaud in the proposals, in particular the shift from facilitating private cars and median parking to prioritising pedestrian experience alongside active and sustainable transport. George Street businesses fear alienating drivers and inconvenient (un)loading arrangements. Sceptics doubt CEC can maintain *any* street properly, let alone an expensively upgraded one.

Spurtle reckons all improvements risk being ruined unless CEC’s impulse to fill George Street’s ‘flexible space’ with year-round ‘animating’ congestion and ‘temporary’ Event structures is checked.

PILRIG REMEMBERS



The WW1 heroics of Pilrig resident Sapper Adam Archibald VC were marked with the laying of a commemorative flagstone near his Shaw’s St home last month. Appropriately enough, Archibald worked in peacetime for Edinburgh pavers Stuart’s Granolithic. See [bit.ly/2RNtccW].

CEC’S PRINCES STREET GARDENS CONSERVATION POLICIES (EDITED HIGHLIGHTS)



CP3 Maintain and enhance views and physical relationship between Gardens and adjoining streets and public places, conserving setting of the Gardens.

CP7 Conserve the appearance as a wooded valley in views along the length while retaining cross views.

CP8 Maintain and develop essential character as green, open, restful haven, for passive recreation, away from the hard, enclosed and busy city streets.

CP11 Conserve and upgrade general fabric and horticultural features ... to a standard compatible with World Heritage Site status and capital location.

CP12 Aim to eliminate or reduce effects of intrusive features.

CP13 Reduce volume and impact of vehicular traffic.

CP15 Plan events to avoid displacing regular uses, minimise intrusion, with attention to sustainability and carrying-capacity of the landscape.

TANGLED ROOTS OF EAST PRINCES STREET GARDENS MESS

The New Town & Broughton Community Council discussed the recent controversial felling of 52 trees in East Princes Street Gardens at its November meeting.

Cllr Mowat explained that relevant detailed proposals had been properly and diligently considered as part of two successful planning applications from the Scottish National Galleries (most recently in June 2018). She acknowledged that the result is temporarily ‘hideous’, but said it would improve over time. Cllr Miller confirmed proposals were and continue to be available online, but felt that they had been poorly publicised.

Spurtle can confirm that prioritising removal of ‘scattered tree planting on slope below middle terrace as historically and visually intrusive and screening views’ forms part of CEC’s *Princes Street Gardens Management Plan 2017–18* (Appendix 3). But, like much of CEC’s use of the Gardens for income-optimising events, it seems at odds with other aspirations expressed in Appendix 1 (see panel right).

Andrew Heald, a local resident and professional forester, said more trees had been felled for aesthetic/landscaping reasons than to improve disabled access to the new SNG extension. He criticised inadequate CEC supervision of Underbelly’s Christmas Market, whose structures and construction compact soil around root systems and are killing those trees that remain. These practices contravene CEC policy and ignore ‘sacrosanct’ provisions in the SNG planning submission. There is no point in replanting trees, Heald says, if you then crush the life out of them.

Cllr Miller is actively pushing for answers from Council officers. Cllr Mowat seeks improved consultation arrangements when environmental impacts affect the public realm. Alasdair Rankin and Karen Doran (the other two City Centre councillors) did not attend, and, so far as *Spurtle* can ascertain, have had nothing whatsoever to say on the matter elsewhere. Perhaps this reflects Coalition tensions. Perhaps they don’t care. Perhaps they’re just stumped.

Briefly



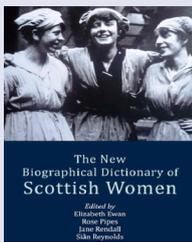
Don't blink or yule miss it. **Ingrid Nilsson's** 'Distracted' is one highlight of the current exhibition at Lennon-Art Gallery on **Henderson Row**. Featuring 10 local artists, the show focuses on **small-scale and affordable works** (painting, sculpture, collage), and runs until 4 Jan.

Cornerstone Property withdrew its latest change-of-use application (bank to hostel) for **2-3A Blenheim Pl** on 30 Oct (18/07713/FUL). A Government Reporter considering Cornerstone's appeal against refusal of retrospective planning consent for its short-term lets at **7-8 Baxter's Pl** (PPA-230-2249) made a site visit early last month. Cornerstone **strenuously denies allegations** of anti-social behaviour by guests, and loss of amenity for nearby residents. A **decision is expected by 7 Dec**. Meanwhile, CEC Enforcement has served a notice requiring the same premises to cease being used as **backpacker accommodation** (00/00836/ECOU).

Broughton History Society meets next at 7pm on 14 Jan in Drummond CHS. Wendy Ugolini will talk on **'The Enemy Within: Recovering Italian Scottish Experience during the Second World War'**.

Cheaper, crisper, whiter, greener, and longer-lasting **street lights** began to appear in Edinburgh last month. Replacing 65k amber ones, they will save **£54M over 20 years**. Expect them in **Inverleith** (Nov 2019), followed in 2020 by **Leith** (Feb-Mar), **Leith Walk** (Mar-Apr), and the **City Centre** (May-Jun).

The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women, recently published by Edinburgh University Press, contains at least 4 entries on former Broughtonians: the painter **Anne Redpath**; the brewing and biochemistry



boffin **Professor Anna MacGillivray Macleod FRSE**; the Spanish Civil War veteran, charity worker, and proprietor of the 1960s Partisan Café on Victoria St **Elizabeth Girling**; and the Labour Party activist **Freda White**. If you know of others, please tell us.

As reported in Issue 278, **cut-out coppers** are now used to deter vandals, burglars, bad drivers, and delinquent OAPs with too much time on their hands. No such luck on **Abercromby Pl**, where, despite chain and padlock, a cardboard officer's **below-the-belt half** has been pinched. Worse, a complete rozzar was recently stolen from **Lower Granton Rd**. Alas, when constabulary duty's to be done, a pop-up policeman's not a happy one.

Time to trim commercial use of parks

Part of a report ('Managing our Festival City') to the Culture & Communities Committee last month shed interesting light on how last summer's controversial concerts in West Princes Street Gardens came about (Issue 277).

Following closure of the Picture House in 2013 and the consequent lack of a live contemporary-music venue, DF Concerts approached City of Edinburgh Council with a proposal for six 'Summer Sessions'. After discussions with C&C and Transport & Environment Conveners, Executive Director of Place Paul Lawrence took over for CEC under delegated authority. Elected members' input was thus circumvented.

Discussing the report last month, C&C members expressed concerns about: concerts coinciding with other Festival events; city-centre congestion for ordinary street uses; noise cross-over with the Tattoo; gradual extension of 'poorly managed' performance space from the Old Town down to George Street. It also emerged that CEC regards the six sessions as one event, which may bode ill for how Ross Bandstand programmes are managed in future.

It was resolved that, in future, prior to concert arrangements being finalised, site visits by C&C members to W. Princes Street Gardens should be part of a more democratically accountable decision-making process. The aim was to improve oversight, access, and public safety.

At a later meeting of the full Council on 22 November, when the same report was again discussed, Cllr Mowat called for the Summer Sessions to be moved to a less busy part of the season. Edinburgh, she said, 'needs space to breathe'. Other parties agreed this should be considered, along with a ban on amplified busking, but not just yet: more discussion should follow a report early next year.

In a surprisingly successful Green addendum on Events and Attractions in Parks, Cllr Miller called on the Director of Place to coordinate a review and simplification of policies, to achieve a clear directive to reduce the number of commercial events in parks and green spaces, and to reduce loss of access for members of the public.

Spurtle welcomes these shifts in the discussion. CEC needs to address its opaque processes and how such processes further an apparent official presumption favouring ever more commercialisation in public spaces ... a presumption few locals remember voting for.

Fewer setts, better street?

Two petitions to City of Edinburgh Council, calling for the setts on East London Street to be partially replaced, attracted over 250 signatures by the closing date on 16 November.

Local resident Neil Gordon, who lodged the petitions, says the street's condition has deteriorated badly owing to heavy usage (typically 1k vehicles per day), including some 60 double-decker buses and 10 HGVs on typical weekday mornings from 5.30 to 7.30am. He deplores the noise of such traffic crossing setts, and the likely disruption and expense of a full-scale repair project.

Instead, Gordon calls for a similar arrangement to the 'attractive' one on London Street, with setts retained for the parking bays, and tarmac laid in the middle. The result, he says, would be a quieter, cheaper, and more easily maintained thoroughfare.

The petitions were considered by the Transport & Environment Committee on 26 November, too late for us to report here.



Holyrood setback for Planning reformers

Those seeking legal reforms to allow communities to appeal against planning decisions (as developers already do) were disappointed on 7 November. Holyrood's Local Government & Communities Committee rejected amendments to the Planning Bill, by Andy Wightman MSP, that would have allowed the change.

The No votes of 3 SNP members outweighed 2 Yes votes by Green and Labour. The Conservative member abstained. Wightman will try to reintroduce his amendments at Stage 3 (in early 2019) for debate by the whole Scottish Parliament.

Supporters of a right to 'third-party appeal' say it would make decision making more democratic, improve financial parity between communities and developers, and replace today's 'unfair' system with one people could trust.

Opponents say democratic pre-application consultation already exists. Third-party appeals would slow down the planning process, stretch already underfunded local authorities, discourage much needed new housing and business premises, and make Scotland's economy less competitive.

Former CEC Planning Convener Trevor Davies wrote in the *Spurtle* about this two years ago: [bit.ly/2AQsUfx].

Edinburgh on high: Foxy lady

How did this intrepid, on-the-lookout vixen fetch up on the roof of Renaissance Framing in broad daylight at 8 Antigua Street?*

Many people have spotted her from passing cars and the tops of buses, and she certainly startled this writer when ambling past Mr Freedman's Aladdin's golden cave.

She was remarkably still and unflinching in her concentration upon distant things. Whatever one feels about urban foxes, this one seemed gracefully attuned to her environment, displaying an Olympian calm despite the maelstrom of metal powering down Leith Walk. —JRM

*Mr Freedman himself installed the creature three years ago.



Local man's help for the hirple

In 1830s Edinburgh, 29 Broughton Street housed the business of James Fortune, 'spinal truss and bandagemaker, artificial legs, &c.'

Sir Walter Scott, who, ever since his childhood polio infection had suffered from a lame right leg, in adulthood consulted Fortune in the hope of gaining some pain relief.

So successful was the result that, in a letter of 1831, Scott immortalised the skilful mechanist with this playful reworking of a 16th-century English ballad:

*Fortune, my Foe, why dost thou frown on me?
And will my Fortune never better be?
Wilt thou, I say, for ever breed my pain?
And wilt thou ne'er return my joys again?*

No,—let my ditty be henceforth—

*'Fortune, my Friend, how well thou favourest me!
A kinder Fortune man did never see!
Thou propp'st my thigh, thou ridd'st my knee of pain,
I'll walk, I'll mount—I'll be a man again.—*

Perhaps this encomium helped Fortune's own fortunes, for he moved to more prestigious premises on Princes Street around 1840.—Barclay Price



Backing peace in Palestine

After five years spent in the Mansfield Traquair Centre as a third-sector social-justice campaigner, Sophie Bridger's is a familiar face in the Broughton area. But for now, she's keeping a low profile.

For the next three months, she'll be working for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. Her work, alongside peace groups from both communities, will involve trying to deter violence, and monitoring human-rights abuses. In this volatile region, individuals are advised not to draw too much attention to themselves; hence, her back to the camera.

'The situation in Israel and Palestine is complicated,' says Bridger, 'but it's important not to forget the people on the ground who are affected every day by the conflict. By living alongside those in the West Bank, I hope I'll learn more about how Scotland can contribute to peace and human rights in Israel and Palestine.'

EAPPI was set up by the World Council of Churches following violence on the West Bank in 2002.



Picardy residents raise concerns

Picardy Residents Association has been pressing the Council on two issues lately. First, since February 2017, it has sought early consultation with a wide cross-section of locals on the design of the new Picardy Place promontory. Despite initial indications this would happen, in fact it hasn't to Chair Peter Williamson's satisfaction. Instead, he now expects locals to be fobbed off with the kind of unminuted drop-in consultations which have proved so frustrating in the past.

On a second front, PRA wants the Council to research the likely impact on local businesses of 140 retail units in the new St James Quarter. Officials have promised, but not provided, the results of a 2005 assessment. PRA is not convinced by vague assurances that footfall will increase on nearby high streets, and has now formally requested better data.

Briefly



Photo: Courtesy of Eileen Dickie

Congratulations to quirky TWERQY **Typewronger Books**, whose owner Tom Hodges celebrated one year of business in Broughton early last month [<https://bit.ly/2DXoZjY>].

A potential buyer for RBS's site at **Fettes Row/Dundas St** (Issue 279) has contacted local figures in confidence to **gauge opinion**.

Nine teenage boys have been reported by Police in connection with a recent spate of bicycle thefts. **Twenty bikes (worth over £25k)** were returned to owners.

Temporary (2-year) planning consent has been granted for Out of the Blue to use land behind **165 Leith Walk** for open-air market stalls and a skate park (Ref. 18/03674/FUL). **Four film nights and four music events per year** are allowed. Temporary permission has **already been given** to put flexible business people in the refurbished building adjacent, and artists in crates. See page 4.

The Botanics will consult the public on a **major upgrade of buildings** [bit.ly/2DXtY48] on 10 Jan, 4pm–7.30pm, at **20A Inverleith Row**.

A **citywide ban on A-boards** came into effect on 5 Nov. In the interests of coherent policy application, we look forward to Festival/Fringe-related **advertising obstructions** and CEC's Toblerone-shaped **lamppost wraparounds** disappearing too [bit.ly/2qiLLdk]. For a trip down memory lane, start here [bit.ly/2RvEWkf].

Last month, reader Leslie Hills sent us this photo taken on **Scotland St**. Is it, she wondered, 'the most New Town fly tip ever?'



New Town & Broughton Community Council broadly supports CEC's **City Transformation** proposals (Issue 278): [bit.ly/2PLwaC9]. But it's concerned by the potential for **displaced traffic/parking** in adjoining areas, opposes any immediate **reduction of bus services** through the city centre, and urges **preserving existing public spaces** over creating new ones.

In Issue 279 we mistakenly said rubber kerbs in **Gayfield Sq** are a diversion survival from the first round of tramworks down **Leith Walk**. A local resident corrects us: they were installed long before in reaction to the death of a child (and the injury of another) caused by a vehicle speeding from **Antigua St to E London St**.

Moreover ...

Community Councils Together on Trams combines the local expertise of 4 community councils along the proposed **tram extension route to Newhaven**. They support it in principle but have major reservations about aspects of: on-street design; economic impact; absence of an up-to-date environmental case; the initially tight time-frame (later extended to Mar 2019) for reaching a decision on proceeding or not. Read their **detailed response** here: [bit.ly/2DIm6LY].

New **pedestrian crossings** are rescheduled for construction (subject to TROs and/or further design consultation) at: W end of **London St** (2018/19); **Pilrig St** at Cambridge Ave (2019/20); W end of **Gt King St** (2018/19); **Albany/Dublin St** (2020/21); **E London St** roundabout (2021/22); **Annandale St** roundabout x 2 (2021/22).

Gleneagles Hotel has gained planning permission to convert A-listed **37 and 38-39 St Andrew Sq** into a 33-bedroom hotel (Ref. 18/03272/FUL).

Water of Leith Conservation Trust's 30 years of achievement were honoured at a Civic Reception in **Edinburgh City Chambers** on 21 Nov. Over that period, the Trust has delivered **1.4k** conservation tasks/clean-ups, cleared **5k** cubic metres of rubbish, and led **3.7k** learning sessions to schools and community groups.

Termshield Ltd seeks temporary 5-year planning consent to redevelop **74-76 Newhaven Road** (18/09350/FUL). The former Newhaven Inn went up in smoke in August 2016. Termshield's application states that 'The proposal is intended as a stop-gap for the redevelopment of the site whilst a lengthy insurance case is contested following the devastating fire.' Plans entail replacing the current attic with an **additional two storeys**, to be made out of six, zinc-clad, steel shipping containers welded together. The owner envisages running the enlarged premises as a family-friendly waterside bar bistro. **Leith Central Community Council** objects, saying the proposal would be too high, visually obtrusive, and inappropriate next to the B-listed **Bonnington Bridge**. **Spurtle** applauds Termshield's commercial resilience and ingenuity, but suspects the finished structure [bit.ly/2Dz7KUW] would look marginally less incongruous aboard the CSCL *Globe* [bit.ly/2Bt7Snz].

This is the **last printed Spurtle** for 2018. Team members will now bury themselves under **compost heaps** until Feb. News and features continue online at [bit.ly/99jeuR]. We wish you a **Merry Christmas** and a **Happy New Year**.

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

Post: Spurtle, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ.

Printed by Minuteman Press, 63 Elm Row.



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LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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

Participate in local democracy.

Make representations to City of Edinburgh Council, other public bodies and private agencies on everything that matters locally.

Next meeting: 7pm, 21 January 2019
Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates



Leith Central Community Council

Deidre Brock MP
Edinburgh North and Leith



Regular Surgeries

Leith: 1st Friday of the month
1-2pm, 166 Great Junction Street
Leith Walk: 2nd Friday of the month
3.30-4.30pm, McDonald Rd Library
Stockbridge: 3rd Friday of the month
1-2pm Stockbridge Library
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre: Last Friday, 4-5pm
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Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency



Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

Every Monday:
5-6pm at
Leith Library
28-30 Ferry Road
Edinburgh
EH6 4AE

Every Friday:
4-5pm at
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre
Pilton Drive North
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New Town and Broughton Community Council
NEW TOWN & BROUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

represents the views of local residents to City of Edinburgh Council.

You're very welcome to attend.

Come along and make a difference at our next meetings

10 Dec, 7 Jan, 7.30pm,
Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbcc.org.uk