

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

FLAWED MANAGEMENT PLAN GETS A MAULING

Consultation on the draft World Heritage Site Management Plan ended on 15 Apr. Partners Edinburgh World Heritage, Historic Environment Scotland and (the Planning Dept of) City of Edinburgh Council wrote it [bit.ly/EWHSMP].

If draft Plan fans exist, they haven't contacted the *Spurtle*. Instead, we hear consultees alleging it reflects poor current practice and proposed approaches to governance, transparency, competence, ambition and accountability. Flaws include:

- Unhelpful disconnects between EWH's full-time, expert, ground-level management team and its decision-making board of directors. Insufficient top-level engagement by directors.

- Inability of HES to comment on all issues – e.g. Traffic Regulation Orders – affecting life in the WHS.

- Planning Dept's 'undue influence' without input from other relevant departments or full Council.

- EWH's reliance on HES and Edinburgh Council funding. Independent body might make better choices.

- Wishy-washy aspirations. Too few detailed ambitions. 'Toothless' capacity to drive actions.

- No operational flowchart clarifying who has responsibility for what and when.

- Poor metrics to judge if targets are met.

- No way for public/stakeholders to contribute ideas.

- Insufficient checks and balances holding those in charge accountable.

Some frustrated critics want a letter of complaint sent to UNESCO. Others suggest Edinburgh Council's internal audit service should assess if the Plan is effective and meets statutory requirements. There are calls for a coordinated response by interested bodies across the city.

The Cockburn Association criticised the Plan's failure to address [bit.ly/CckbEWH]: (1) climate change/impacts, (2) general disrepair of traditional buildings, (3) declining quality of streetscape and public realm, (4) negative impact of overtourism, (5) sharing relevant and reliable data, (6) sufficient engagement of heritage stakeholders, residents and local businesses. Like others, it called for more robust management targets and key performance indicators in the next 2-year Action Plan.



PLEASE MIND THE GAPS



We hear that the innovative play equipment illustrated above is being considered for King George V Park. The German manufacturer Berliner says such 'Greenville structures can be combined in endless configurations through the use of exciting connecting elements'. With its promise of multiple thrills and spills, it would certainly go some way towards compensating for the loss of the old chute. However, given a reputed total cost of £250k, we're sceptical that it will appear here anytime soon. Dizzying funding gaps tend to trump dizzying sky-tracks every time. See more at [bit.ly/upndwn2].

BOUNDARY CHANGE – WHO BENEFITS?



With a General Election looming, political activists have been busy doorstepping voters for months. Their efforts are geographically shaped by the Boundary Commission's Review of Westminster Parliament Constituencies which came into force in Nov 2023.

The Commission stipulates that each constituency must contain 69,724–77,062 electors (except for the 'protected' cases of Na h-Eileanan Siar and Orkney & Shetland). No constituency can be larger than 13,000 km². The net effect of this is that at the next General Election, Scotland will have 2 fewer constituencies than it did in 2019.

The constituency which Spurtleshire adorns is Edinburgh North & Leith. Because its electorate numbered 80,344 at the time of the review, it has been trimmed down to 76,770. To achieve this, it has acquired Muirhouse and Telford at its northwest extreme, and lost all or parts of Drylaw, Blackhall, Craighleith, Comely Bank and Dean Village at its southwest extreme. You can see the current map here [bit.ly/newENL].

Spurtle spoke to activists or elected members from each of the five main political parties last month. Some were more qualified and experienced than others, but the consensus was that the practical effect of the impartial boundary change to Edinburgh North & Leith probably favours the SNP most. Make of that what you will.

SAY HELLO TO PLANS WITH YELLOW

Dunedin Street LLP has submitted revised plans for purpose-built student accommodation at 26 Dunedin St. The development would comprise 65 bedrooms with internal and external amenity space [bit.ly/26DunSt]. A south-facing biodiverse roof terrace on level 5 would, we suppose, allow residents to sit outside in studious contemplation. But how this would be managed is unclear.

The design statement identifies an immediate context of materiality in neighbouring areas: brown brick in Boat Green, buff brick and white render in Beaverbank Pl, red brick in Powderhall Rd, red brick and pebbledash in Dunedin St, buff stone in Clarendon Cres and Broughton Rd, buff stone and white render in Powderhall Rd.



Not blending in with any of these, the development's own proposed materials are 'predominantly a combination of dark grey/black brick cladding and metal cladding profiles in silver and yellow with silver coated metal doors and metal framed windows, tying the scheme in to the site's post-industrial aesthetic'. The applicants say these have been welcomed by Planning officers who understand how the 'palette ties into the adjacent arthouse proposal and wider development aspirations for the area'.

Dunedin Street's previous application for this site was refused in Oct 2023. Its architects have sought to address the reasons for that decision by improving the development's relationship to boundary and adjacent Makers Yard, improving the quality and quantum of internal and external amenity, including an 'appropriate typology mix', and ensuring easy access for services and refuse.

At last month's New Town & Broughton Community Council meeting, the consensus was that the plans will be approved, despite locals' concerns about the proposal's height and intrusive overlooking, and a faulty map's inclusion in the neighbour notification paperwork.

Briefly



The route of **Lothian Buses'** new Regal Tour includes royal haunts such as **Broughton Rd, Eyre Pl, Dundas St, York Pl and Bonnington Rd**. We trust locals will condescend to **wave to passing tourists** as they pass through.

Scammers active in **Spurteshire** claim to be reformed prisoners selling cleaning products door-to-door. **They are not**, and if they suggest chumming you to an ATM to take out some cash, **don't go**.

In recent weeks, **Leith-based police officers** and Special Constables undertaking road checks have seized 3 vehicles, detected **13 road traffic offences** and 1 drug offence, and made 1 positive breath test where the driver was arrested for being **more than 4x over the legal alcohol limit**. In other road-safety checks, they detected 25 offences related to mobile-phone use. **Readers are reminded** that driving while operating a mobile phone greatly increases one's chances of calling a wrong number.

A 51-bdrm hotel will operate at B-listed **10 Picardy Pl**, the former premises of Hertz Car Hire (23/011788/LBC). Although disappointed that restoring elements of the **original palace facade** would be too expensive, Edinburgh World Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland welcomed other **conservation gains** concerning roof, basement well, windows and railings. **New Town & Broughton CC** also offered general support for the proposals, but noted locals' views in favour of the reformed frontage might have been influenced by the fact that **'just about anything would be an improvement vs. the current situation'**.



The Stockroom deli opened at **62 Raeburn Pl** in Dec and closed without warning or explanation soon after. Stockbridge began to fizz with rumours. Following our online coverage [bit.ly/Stkfzz], a sign appeared in the window last month apologising for the recent 'radio silence' and promising to be 'back soon' with an 'elevated offering'.

Leith Central Community Council notes that 'an appeal against the Council's enforcement case regarding **11 Pilrig Street** (unauthorised alterations to listed building, **illegal operation of residential premises** as unstaffed short-term let since July 2022) has stalled in the **Court of Session** until at least "several months after mid-May", with a decision "at least a month after that".'

Powderhall housing proposals move forward

Edinburgh Council has submitted plans for Phase 1 of a mixed housing development on the site of the former Powderhall Waste Transfer Station at 165 Broughton Rd (24/01596/FUL). At first glance, it appears to be an attractive and well-conceived addition to Edinburgh's housing stock.

This stage of the proposal comprises 103 affordable flats and 4 townhouses in 3 blocks on the east and south of the site. They include 1, 2 and 3-bdrm flats, 3-bdrm townhouses and four 2-bdrm wheelchair-accessible flats, some for social rent, some mid-market rent, others for private purchase. We summarised the proposal at [bit.ly/165BRd]. If planning consent is granted, phased construction could start in 2025.

Meanwhile, construction firm Cruden has applied on behalf of the Council for planning permission in principle to build 125 flats over 6 storeys on adjacent ground to the west [(24/01570/PPP)]. Details at this stage are scant and indicative while the Council seeks to establish the possibility of such proposals before selling this part of the site for development by the private sector.

Both applications are expected to be determined by 26 July.



Clearer view of rubbish sensors

A recent Freedom of Information request (44701) has brought to light more information about the Council's £6.4m project to install smart sensors in 11k bins across Edinburgh. These sensors alert officials at HQ about when bins are becoming full, when they're emptied and how often they're used.

An unconfirmed back-of-an-envelope calculation suggests the sensors cost about £581 per bin. Batteries last 3-5 years before needing to be replaced, but no other hardware upgrades should be required throughout the hardware's lifespan.

Some say this represents good value for money if it results in improved service efficiency, reduced costs and less rubbish on streets. Others disagree, saying they constitute 'extra fancy stuff' at a time when basic services in the capital are not being delivered.

Spurtle also hears of frustration that no requests from the public prompted a Phase-1 trial of the scheme, and no public consultation preceded roll-out of Phase 2. We welcome your views on the subject.

New plans made public for old Royal High School

Although the Royal High School Preservation Trust already has 2 consented planning applications for the Regent Rd campus (15/05662/FUL and 22/024469/FUL), it has now brought forward a third (24/01804/FUL).

As we first reported in Sept 2023 [bit.ly/No332p1], the latest iteration responds to 'the economic pressures faced across the construction industry whilst retaining and meeting the strategic objectives for the site' and its use as a National Centre for Music. The most significant change is that it no longer provides space for a new St Mary's Music School campus.

Under the new application [bit.ly/oRHS3], most of the more recent buildings around the centrepiece would be removed (but not the listed gatehouse). This would return Hamilton's masterpiece to something more like its original stand-alone context. New outdoor pleasure grounds and event spaces would be created by landscaping the former playgrounds.

The latest plans propose using the Hamilton rooms for public-facing, front-of-house facilities and performance spaces, with office and musician accommodation in the East Wing. The West Wing would house dining and conference uses. Three main performance and rehearsal spaces would be located in the main hall and octagonal rooms.

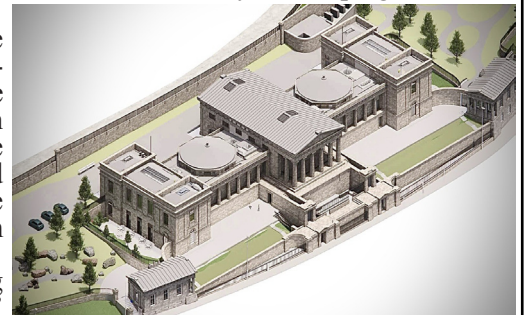
Back-of-house activities (including toilets) would occupy the 'expanded' lower ground-floor level, but remain within the building's current footprint. To achieve this, areas of rock would be excavated for the first time to provide 2 new plant rooms and 2 new staircases.

The former Furnace room would be removed, with space extended northwards to provide a central public foyer space and interval bar below the main hall.

The main public pedestrian entrance would be from Regent Rd via the West Gate and garden then across the South Terrace to an existing west door below the portico. The controversial new door below the portico, which appeared in previous proposals, has been dropped. Space to the north of the site is earmarked for additional Festival use with, for example, the erection of a temporary Spiegel tent and ancillary structures.

In a letter to Edinburgh Council dated 3 April 2024, Historic Environment Scotland offers strong support. 'The current proposals are a very welcome project for one of Scotland's most significant buildings and will be sensitive to the building and its important setting.'

'We hope the application can be approved and work can start on site before too long.' Hear, hear to that.



Music in the streets

From the Edinburgh Evening News, 11 October 1895. "Justice All Round" writes:

I must distinctly protest against the way our constables treat the street musician. The trio I wish to uphold, not that I am in any way connected with them, but simply because I greatly appreciate their music—I refer to the harp player and the two violinists who are generally to be found playing off Princes Street.

I will just give an instance how the above trio were, in my opinion, very unfairly treated. On a night of last week I happened to be walking along Princes Street when I heard them rendering some beautiful music in South Castle Street, when a constable came on the scene and shifted them; but the most aggravating bit of the lot, while walking homeward towards the West End I noticed that another trio had taken up their stand in South Charlotte Street, grinding away with an old barrel organ.

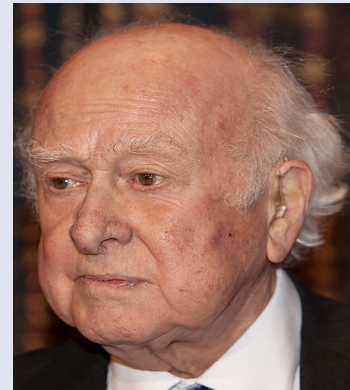
Now, I have noticed the above trio in almost every street off Princes from the west end to the east end, and I have never seen them shifted once; and lastly not leastly, just at the Rutland corner I came upon the inevitable German band, with a large crowd round them, and a constable among them seemingly enjoying the music.

Now, to look at it this way, if a crowd is not blocking the pavement at the Rutland corner, surely they can't be obstructing in South Castle Street.

I would like very much to know where the constables draw the line. Perhaps it is their musical tastes.



Briefly



Spurtle enjoyed the **touching economy** of @kathy_odonnell on X last month. Writing about the demise of a distinguished **Darnaway St** resident, she wrote, 'I'm sorry to hear Peter Higgs has died. He was my neighbour and we chatted about this and that. What I never told him was that seeing him pass by James Clerk Maxwell's house [on India St], shopping bag in hand, was, for me, like watching Einstein walk past Newton's apple tree.'

Burnavie Ltd has permission to build two 3-bdrm 'mews style' dwellings on the former Capital City Partnership car park at **3 Canon Lane** (23/06946/FUL). Consent for a similar scheme, granted in 2018, had elapsed.

Broughton History Society meets next on 6 May at 6pm in **McDonald Rd Library**. Veronica Fraser will talk on *Scottish Vernacular Buildings in Edinburgh*. You'll have had your ogee, then?

Edinburgh Council has responded to a **recent Freedom of Information** request regarding tramway-related Traffic Orders on **Greenside Lane** (46996). It emerges that, while the Transport & Environment Cmte on 19 Aug 2021 approved a report in which a map shows the stopping-up of the lane where it joins **Leith Walk**, there is no record of an earlier discussion, or road-safety audit, or **Traffic Regulation Order** allowing this process to take place. So, the steep but unnoticed step created here, on which **unwary drivers kept getting stuck**, and the new bollard which supplemented it in Feb 2024 (Issue 337) may not be legal. **We await developments.**

Ruma, the rum and cocktail bar that seemed about to open at 1 Gayfield Sq last summer, instead opened at **39-41 Broughton St** (next to Real Foods) on 29 Mar.

Consultation on if or how to adjust Edinburgh's areas of **alcohol-licence overprovision** will continue until mid-May. Police Scotland note clear correlations between **density of alcohol-serving** and crime. But others flag nuanced distinctions regarding (1) the number of premises, (2) their size and (3) how many hours they're open. It's rarely as simple as it first looks, not least through a glass darkly.

After just 7 years, Nuveen, owner of the St James Qtr, has sold the **OMNi Centre** to the Triple B (Bata siblings) investment portfolio for an undisclosed sum reputed to be in the region of £65m. As first reported by *Spurtle* in Oct last year (Issue 333), this figure represents a **significant drop in value** from 2006 when the complex was sold for £107m and 2017 when it fetched £74m.

To report **obstructive parking** on footways and **double-parking** on roads, fill in the online form at: edinburgh.gov.uk/incorrectlyparked.

Moving plea for better placed bin-hubs

In a polite but pointed letter to Council officials, Leith Central Community Council has called for a review of 'inconsiderately located' bin-hubs outside residents' ground-floor windows. It says they cause distress and inconvenience. LCCC requests:

- a comprehensive review of bin-hub placements, particularly those located close to residential properties
- meaningful engagement with residents to identify alternative locations
- transparency about how bin-hub locations are chosen, and about how residents' alternative suggestions are rejected
- prompt implementation of corrective measures prioritising residents' wellbeing and quality of life.



The future of local journalism in Scotland

As part of the UK-wide Indie News Week and the 'No News is Bad News' campaign from the Public Interest News Foundation, the *Scottish Beacon* (of which *Spurtle* is a founding member) will hold its first public event in Edinburgh on 7 June.

The campaign is based on the belief that a well-informed community is more able to act together to shape its own future, that local news is fundamental to a healthy democratic society and invaluable in helping to create strong communities. Despite this, independent community news providers struggle to generate enough revenue to carry out their work, putting local democracy, civic engagement and community cohesion at risk.

Scottish Beacon partners are holding an event which brings to light the value of independent public-interest news providers in Scotland's communities and discusses the challenges they face, with a lively day of talks, workshops and discussions.

The day will comprise: panels, 'lightning talks', interactive workshops and conversations, and a chance to network with others interested in public-interest journalism. Lunch and teas/coffees provided.

Topics covered in panels and workshops will include: the future of local news and its role in communities; how policies can better support public-interest journalism; diversifying the news – why representation matters; the possibility of a Scottish Public-Interest Journalism Institute; funding journalism; influencing behaviour change through climate reporting.

A confirmed list of speakers will appear on our website nearer the time. The event takes place from 10am-4pm on Friday 7 June in The Grassmarket Community Project (86 Candlemaker Row). Tickets are available from eventbrite at [bit.ly/NNBN].



Moreover ...



After **50 years** as editor of the literary journal *Chapman*, the pleasure of local resident **Dr Joy Hendry** in living surrounded by books has at last been overtaken by her concern at the prospect of being buried alive under an **indoor avalanche**. A major clear-out is underway. Many interesting and some valuable titles seek good homes on a **pay-what-you-can basis**. To discuss or view, email: joyhendry@blueyonder.co.uk.

As you read this, Dublin St will likely still be shut between **Dublin Lane North and Albany St** while Scottish Water repairs a broken sewer. Work is anticipated to finish by the end of this month.

Some 36 new studio, 1, 2 and 3-bdrm apartments are now going on sale at the St Bernard's building on **Logie Green Rd**. Those marketing the venue describe it as being in 'vibrant **Cannonmills**', so ... not only spelling it wrong but forgetting its closer proximity to **Powderhall** and the **Beaver Lands**.

As soon as Police Scotland resources allow, officers will pursue intimidatory dog fouling at the corner of **Dublin St** and **Drummond Pl**. Public gratitude will vary according to locals' attitude to the filth.

In online coverage last month, *Spurtle* examined possible membership reforms at the **Quinquaginta Club** [bit.ly/Q1424]. We await confirmation of whether mooted changes were voted through.

Council staff have repaired the mechanism which remotely opens and shuts the road-gate at the foot of **Calton Hill**. They have also installed a new sign reading '**Authorised vehicles only**'. It's a positive step towards reducing the number of **unnecessary motor vehicles** accessing the hill. Except the mechanism is not being used. The **Lookout restaurant** and **Collective Gallery** have their own priorities for who enters by the road and when. Talks continue.

A **Scottish Govt Reporter** has allowed Lionacre Property Ltd's appeal and granted planning permission for **6 Picardy Pl** to operate as a restaurant (PPA-230-2476). There are 2 conditions. First, that the reheating equipment of **intended operator Taco Bell** be restricted to 1 steamer, 1 hot-water rethermaliser, 1 toaster, 1 hot plate and 1 fryer. (No limits were stipulated for maximum number of Michelin Stars.) Second, that the operator may use a 'recirculating filtration tower' (rather than air extraction by flue to a height above the eaves) so long as it's always on during working hours with **regular maintenance and filter replacement** logged for inspection by Council officers. Ah, the appetising smell of compromise ... how many will enjoy it?

Spurtle Team: E. Brown, 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.
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LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Will you take a leading role in local democracy?

Are you interested in representing locals' views to City of Edinburgh Council, other public bodies and private agencies in this area?



Leith Central Community Council

LCCC seeks local people to take key roles as Chair and Vice Chair. Guidance on offer from experienced members. Next meeting at 7pm on 20 May in McDonald Road Library.

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

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

I hold monthly Help & Advice Surgeries.

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