

# Spurtle



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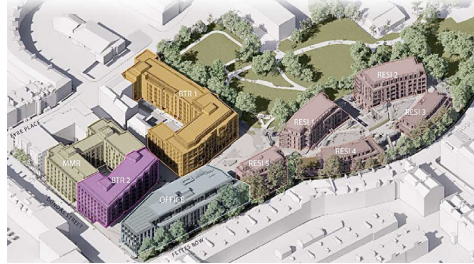
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## COMPLICATIONS FOR NEW TOWN QUARTER

New Town Quarter developers Ediston and Orion Capital Managers propose big changes to their masterplan for the former RBS site between Dundas St and King George V Park. *Spurtle* broke the story on 7 Sept, and longer analysis and reactions appear at [\[bit.ly/NTQnq\]](http://bit.ly/NTQnq).

If approved, purpose-built student accommodation (around 500 beds) would replace consented build-to-rent uses. Residential units would replace the consented 'Network' office building. The number of private-for-sale units would rise to about 200 (TBC).



Ross McNulty, Development Director for Ediston, ascribes the changes to construction-cost inflation, rising interest rates, and the Scottish Gov't's commitment to rental caps.

Readers' reactions to the news have all been negative. *Spurtle* regrets the dilution of a potential mixed and settled community here but is more willing than some to view the 'flips' as a pragmatic commercial response to difficult market conditions rather than a cynical gaming of the system.

In any case, informed response can only follow formal presentation of the new plans over coming weeks.

## POWDERHALL LATEST

Close questioning of the Council has produced further clarification of progress on the Powderhall development sites.

Readers will recall that plans for the development of an early-years centre for 128 children and 27 older people's homes on the former bowling-green site at 165 Broughton Rd were approved in November 2021 (21/00381/FUL).

A tender from the principal contractor (CCG) then prompted several questions from Planners, to which answers were required before they could produce a tender report and assess the project's viability. That viability assessment is ongoing, and we expect it to be ready by mid-Dec at the latest.

Meanwhile, long-awaited infrastructural work for Powderhall Stables – comprising electricity, water, drainage and sewerage connections – began on 9 Sept and should finish by mid-Dec. Scottish Water granted the Council's request for a special temporary dispensation allowing surface-water drainage into an existing sewer rather than its preferred option: the Water of Leith [\[bit.ly/PdStcnx\]](http://bit.ly/PdStcnx).



## PRETTY IN PINK OR PRETTY OBJECTIONABLE?

In Issue 343 last month, we reported the Enforcement case concerning Edinburgh Street Food's unauthorised development of a container, van and trailer outside the OMNi Centre. We now learn that ESF has applied (in part retrospectively) to install 5 mobile catering units/kiosks and associated works in the area (24/03724/FUL). These would be permanent additions operating from noon to 10pm each day.

In a supporting statement, ESF's agent offers no explanation for why 3 of the units were positioned without planning permission. Instead, it argues that the proposed horsebox, steel shed, cargo container and corrugated pink Citroën represent a design-led approach enhancing the character, attractiveness, vitality and accessibility of the space. The development would also, it says, 'preserve the character and appearance of the New Town Conservation Area in this location, being reflective of the contemporary and commercial nature of the immediate area of Calton Sq, Leith St and the wider OMni Centre'.

*Spurtle* has heard various critical mutterings about this application and related ESF planning issues and is aware of at least one (neutral) comment on the Council's Planning Portal requesting more detail about the design, materials and positioning of the fifth unit. A determination is expected by 18 Oct.



## LIGHTS, CAMERA, GLOOM!



Filming took place over 3 days last month with Broughton streets doubling as 1870s London for Series 2 of the Apple TV adaptation of Edith Wharton's novel *The Buccaneers*. Wedding scenes were staged in and outwith Broughton St Mary's. Parts of the N and W quadrants of Drummond Pl transformed into the fictional Frenshaw Rd. A reader reports that the Garden hosted a realistic-looking bandstand and that horse-drawn carriages travelled along Northumberland St. Late-summer misty glooms settled on the barony almost the moment the cameras arrived, but insiders told *Spurtle* they welcomed the atmosphere and its suggestion of metropolitan pea-soupers.

## NOT WITH A BANG BUT A SPARKLER

As previewed in Issue 343, the Culture & Communities Cmte has voted to implement 4 Firework Control Zones from 1–10 Nov (incl), as requested by locals. Scottish Govt funding of £25k per FCZ is available to help the Council apply the scheme.

One of these zones covers Calton Hill, where it will be a criminal offence to fire a large exploding firework (not, for example, a small Category 1 fountain), including from a private property or garden. Calton Hill Conservation Trust would have preferred year-round control of informal firework use in the area.

The FCZ does not apply to public firework displays delivered by professional operators or community groups and clubs.

Officers and elected members agreed effective advertising of the zones is vital. A review of evidence in the 4 FCZs will follow in Feb 2025, after which a further, broader consultation will look at extending the scheme or even introducing a citywide control zone.

# Briefly



We regret to report that **Markos Wraps & Kebabs** at **50 Broughton St** has ceased trading. In its place comes **Tajo**, selling wraps, kebabs, pizzas and burgers. Next door at No. **50A** (the old home of Concrete Wardrobe), **Crep Exclusive** has opened to satisfy those craving up-market trainers.

**Friends of Pilrig Park** surveyed 170 people there this summer and found over 16% worried about ongoing, drugs-related, antisocial behaviour (including dealing) in the area. Possible solutions include reducing shrubbery, more police patrols, better lighting and CCTV. In other news, LCCC notes that, due to a lack of **specific NHS funding**, some local pharmacies no longer accept used needles collected by community-minded locals. Crighton Pharmacy can still help.

Councillors have approved installation of a bronze sculpture – **Jesus the Homeless** – beside St Mary's RC Cathedral on **Little King St** (Issue 342).

Contrary to earlier reports of its withdrawal, the application (23/06869/FULSTL) to use a former sauna at **40 London St** (later converted to housing) as a short-term let was refused last month. Councillors on the **Development Management Sbcmtc** said such a change would have a 'materially detrimental effect on the living conditions and amenity' of neighbours. Some observers had feared that, because the property had not been lived in, its switch to being an STL might slip through a **potential loophole** in the regulations.

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will be at 6pm on 7 Oct in McDonald Rd Library. Simon Girling will talk at 6.30pm on **Edinburgh Zoo Then and Now**. Members free, visitors £5, well-behaved elephants welcome. See [bit.ly/BrHSoc].

Benches have been removed for repair from the ends of **Bellevue Ter and Pl**. They will not return until May 2025. In response to **Spurtle's** query about the surprise disappearance of the southbound bus shelter on Mansfield Place last month, Transport & Environment Convener **Cllr Stephen Jenkinson** told us, 'We take the safety of all road users and pedestrians incredibly seriously. Due to **recent high winds**, the shelter was removed as it was deemed unstable and a **risk to the public**. A brand-new shelter will be installed at the location by November.'

Councillors have refused permission for the addition of sui generis use in the property at **1 Gayfield Sq** (Issue 341). The change would have made possible the running of a bar. **Some 61 objections were submitted**. The reason for refusal was that 'the proposed hours of operation would have a **materially detrimental effect** on the living conditions and amenity of nearby residents'. This was the 5th related and unsuccessful application here. The owner, GTS Solutions CIC, is an Edinburgh security service which, according to its website, '**sees the world differently**'.

## New buses are talk of the town

The first of Lothian Buses' all-electric double-deckers went into service on the No. 8 and No. 9 routes last month. They can carry 70 passengers and have 2 wheelchair spaces.

Other features of the Volvo BZL include: quieter rides, high-back seats, WiFi, USB chargers, automated next-stop announcements, and a 'driver assault system' for dealing with troublesome customers.

The buses take 3–4 hours to charge at the Annandale St depot. Measuring 10.9m (L) x 4.3m (H) x 2.55m (W), each has a maximum gross vehicle weight (including passengers) of 19.5 metric tons. Hedgehogs living along the route are advised to take care.

Even fans of upgraded public transport worry about the long-term effect of torque generated by such giants on local road surfaces. They point to tight turns at Picardy and Waterloo Pls and setted corners at the west end of London St and east end of Gt King St.

LB is investing £24m in a cleaner and greener fleet and aims to achieve zero emissions by 2035. For technical specs see [bit.ly/3XHvvTs].



## Disquiet about Edinburgh World Heritage changes

Last month, staff from Edinburgh World Heritage briefed representatives of community councils and residents associations about proposed changes to its governance and stakeholder engagement.

Few details were available, but in broad terms we understand that under new articles of association only EWH members would be eligible to become Trustees of the Board.

EWH wants to enhance 'stakeholder engagement' and may offer some management role in a new 'oversight group'. But how this would work is not yet clear, nor is whether this involvement would operate alongside EWH, Edinburgh Council and Historic Environment Scotland or apart from them.

Further details are expected to be made public in advance of EWH's AGM on 7 Oct, when a vote to approve or reject the new arrangements will be taken. In the meantime, among some of those who attended Sept's meetings there is a 'high level of disappointment' and a sense that access to and accountability of EWH is being restricted not improved. It appears flaws identified in EWH's controversial draft Management Plan earlier this year (see Issue 339) may not be addressed.

EWH tells us it's 'taking steps to engage more meaningfully with a wider range of organisations than at present' and plans to 'modernise' its Articles of Association.



## New vision for improved city centre

The Planning, Culture & Communities, and Transport & Environment Cmtes will present a draft Princes St and Waverley Valley Strategy for public and stakeholder consultation soon.

In what one sceptical Broughton observer describes as 'a long aspirational read', the Strategy's objectives are to:

- ensure a safe, attractive and welcoming place for residents, workers and visitors
- protect, promote and enhance the area's heritage and archaeology
- use high-quality public realm to encourage investment, employment and local services

- enhance conditions for active travel and optimal public transport
- adapt buildings, streets and green spaces to cope with climate change
- strengthen Edinburgh's nature network
- maximise round-the-clock safety and inclusivity
- ensure effective service operations.

If all goes according to plan, consultation will start this autumn. After finalisation, we expect in 2025, the Strategy will be used as a material consideration in determining planning applications and in guiding place-management decisions.



## Fine eye for detail

Ross Maclean, late of this parish and publication, was forever exhorting locals to 'Look up!' when they walked the streets of the capital. His point was that so much of Auld Reekie's charm sits hidden in plain sight above the normal level line of vision.

He would surely have relished reader David Stock's new self-published book *Edinburgh's Squares*, which captures the city's (mostly central) streetscapes – from the grandiose to the Lilliputian – in 108 pages, 11 sections and 232 colour photographs.

Stock is more interested here in architecture than in people, and his approach is more documentary than artistic. But with a powerful zoom lens and a fine eye for detail, he brings into focus many quirky details, odd finials and exquisite sculpted figures which even the spiering gaze of Maclean would have struggled to discern.

Explanatory notes include occasional petards which may surprise the unwary. The book is available to *Spurtle* readers for £21 from [davidstock@hotmail.com].—AM



Image: David Stock.

## Leith Walk – More cyclists than first thought

Posting on social-media platform X on 6 Sept, cycling activist Edward Tissiman (@edtiss) compared Cycling Scotland data and personal research into bike use on Leith Walk.

Because cyclists using the carriageway and those heading to or from York Pl and Broughton St don't pass CS's automatic counter on the Leith St cycle lane, he calculates that the number using Leith Walk cycle lanes further north may be much higher than CS's official tally, amounting to an average weekly count of up to 2,880 journeys.

Tissiman's own survey on 5 Sept 2024 (8am–9am, 5pm–6pm) showed 91% of cyclists using Leith Walk were commuting or similar, 2% used cargo bikes to move goods, and 7% were delivering food. 'Northbound evening cyclists [are] more likely to use the road, and morning cycle journeys were almost all towards the city centre. That's due to the convoluted northbound cycle infrastructure, and more cyclists using Leith Walk for non-commuting purposes in the evening, respectively.'



## Briefly



Image: Krzysztof Globisz

The much loved and deeply inhaled **Valvona & Crolla** on **Elm Row** celebrated 90 years in business on 8 Sept. Established by Benedetto Valvona and Alfonso Crolla in 1934, the company remains family-run and is led by Crolla's great-granddaughters **Francesca and Olivia**. *Buon compleanno, congratulazioni e grazie*. We look forward to 2034. Pictured (l-r) are Mary, Francesca, Olivia and Philip Contini (grandson of Alfonso).

**S Gayfield Lane** locals complain of a nearby restaurant's overflowing trade-waste bins and the **marauding gulls** who dine there.

**Friends of Montgomery St Park** will launch a free, hyperlocal, 8-page magazine called **Montgomery Parklife** on 28 Oct. Future issues will be published quarterly.

Both New Town & Broughton and Leith Central Community Councils are braced for **knock-on traffic disruption** if a proposed major refurbishment of the **Calton Sq** office and associated lane closures go ahead at **59 Leith St** (24/03604/FUL).

The **YourGP Group** has pled ignorance of the rules in explaining why it positioned two outward-facing TV screens in the windows of its practice at **53 Dundas St** without first securing listed building consent (24/03997/LBC). In a **further statement**, unlikely to delight neighbours, it continued, 'We felt the screens were a quite tasteful option (especially in comparison to other businesses in the area), which didn't impact the character of the building or have an adverse impact on amenity or public safety.' One of YourGP's **advertised services** is 'medical aesthetics'.

**Broughton Scouts** is a vibrant local Group comprising Beavers (6–8 yrs), Cubs (8–11 yrs) and Scouts (11–14 yrs). They meet at **Greenside Parish Church** and **St Mary's RC Primary School**. At the moment, they're seeking new adult leaders to help the youngest members **learn in a fun environment**. To find out more about current opportunities, contact **David Reid** on 07874 981 007 or by email at [david\_a\_reid@btinternet.com].

The Transport & Environment Cmte agreed on 12 Sept to adjust guidelines for **tables and chairs permits on footways** such that a minimum of 1.5m remains unencumbered for pedestrians. This is all well and good, but **Edinburgh Street Design Guidelines** recommend 2m and a minimum of 3m for busy pedestrian routes (such as **Leith St**). Unfortunately, the same Guidelines do not define 'busy'. Critics suggest the latest T&E report cares more about changes perhaps resulting in **lost income for the Council** than it does about pedestrian safety and convenience.

## Rebuke for floating-bus-stop critics

A recent item in Issue 55 of the online edi.bike newsletter criticised opposition from the Edinburgh Bus Users Group and Edinburgh Living Streets to the city's floating bus stops [bit.ly/edibike55].

Ebi.bike cites evidence from a London Cycling Campaigner and Transport for London suggesting FBSs are 'not only safe but a valuable strategic win' when establishing protected cycleways.

It continues: 'In personal experience of these as both a bus user and a bike user, on the City Centre West to East Link and even the much maligned Leith Walk/Leith Street implementations, the general public are becoming increasingly accustomed and predictable in their observance of the space around these stops.' Sufficient safety guidance also exists for vulnerable and disabled people, it contends.

With no warning *ting*, edi.bike then makes a divisive call for unity: 'Both EdinBUG and ELS would do well to look further afield than their own uni-modal and self-centric positions on this issue. There needs to be a united approach to better and safer public realm from active travel stakeholder groups, and we don't get there with poor and ill-informed recommendations based on hearsay and scepticism.'

## Omnibus conductors don't pay attention

*Condensed from the Edinburgh Evening Courant (14 February 1852).*

Mr Editor, Of late I have frequently had occasion to wish to make use of some of those handsome omnibuses which our spirited townsmen have set on foot, and which I have no doubt will speedily become a lasting benefit to the natives of our fair city. Although this at first sight seems a wish of very easy gratification, yet I have learned from experience, that, on the contrary, it a very hard task indeed.

The conductors seem always to have their attention fixed on anything but procuring more passengers. One fixes his eye immoveably on the Scott Monument, while his vehicle is passing along Princes Street, and seems to be utterly oblivious of all passing in the street—his mind wrapped in ecclesiastical admiration of the Third-Pointed Gothic structure before him. The attention of another seems to be wholly engrossed in minutely observing the passengers in the interior of his vehicle, without even bestowing a cursory glance on the streets which he is traversing.

The usual scene exhibited in Princes Street in the forenoon is a heavy shower of rain, an empty omnibus passing, a damp and excited gentleman violently gesticulating on the pavement, and the conductor in calm and placid contemplation of the Castle Rock.

The question which I wish to ask is, how this distressing evil could be remedied? Your obedient servant, F.F.F.



Image: Wellcome Collection [bit.ly/bus1852].

# Moreover ...



We failed to photograph local peregrines for Issue 343. Reader **Jamie McCowan** has fared better since, capturing this image overlooking a **St Vincent PI** rooftop. The bell tower of St Stephen's Church is another favoured lookout for these aerial raptors.

Edinburgh Council last month committed to continue subsidising the **No. 13 bus service** between Lochend and Craigleith, using the current route. A **preferred bid** has been confirmed and a contract award will be progressed. **Spurteshire stops** are at McDonald Rd, Broughton Rd, Rodney St, Mansfield Pl, London St, Drummond Pl, Gt King St and Dundas St.

Applications for **Leith Chooses** community grants of up to £5k should be made by 10 Oct. The 2024-25 theme is 'Leith Uniting'. Be aware that this **participatory budgeting** exercise is open to groups in parts of the Leith Central Community Council area which few think of as part of Leith: e.g. **Hillside, Redbraes** and addresses between **Pilrig St** and **McDonald Rd**. Voting will take place early next year with results announced in Feb and funds disbursed in the spring. For details visit [bit.ly/LCh2425].

**New Town & Broughton Community Council** will object to renewal of Experimental Traffic Order 21/28A, which includes a temporary cycleway along the south side of **London Rd**. It says 3 bus stops and lack of connection to other cycleways render this section unfit for purpose, and the loss of parking here has worsened congestion around the **Edinburgh Playhouse** and adjacent streets. NTBCC has mixed feelings about ETRO 21/27B between **Canonmills** and **Picardy Pl**. It will argue that some aspects here which favour pedestrian safety should be made permanent, but others which hamper access to local businesses, for example on Broughton St, should be dropped.

The Council's online consultation about **licensing short-term lets** is available at [bit.ly/3TwDdgK] and ends on 14 Oct. Since the scheme's introduction on 1 Oct 2022, there have been **over 4k applications** for home sharing, home letting, home sharing and letting, or secondary letting.

**Leith Central Community Council** questions Edinburgh Council possibly letting locals tend 15 rusty planters on **Leith Walk**. It says Edinburgh's public realm needs cast-iron assurances about maintenance.

In Issue 343 we mentioned the arrival in Oct of Sotto Enoteca & Trattoria at **26-32 Deanhaugh St**. Combinations of ignorance, poor eyesight and wishful thinking have since **fuelled rumours** that the business will quietly stock erotica. To the best of our knowledge, **this is not the case**.

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<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

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