

FACES IN THE NEWS

New crown for mag Queen Cole



CHERYL COLE'S status as the nation's celebrity queen was cemented after being crowned Woman of the Year.

The TV and singing star, 26, scooped the Glamour magazine award at a glitzy ceremony in London last night.

It's been a busy year for Cole, but both her X Factor role and her solo album were overshadowed by her split from husband Ashley.

Cowell tribute to Bethany, 5



BRITAIN'S Got Talent judge Simon Cowell has paid tribute to a "very special little girl" who died of a brain tumour days after fulfilling her "big ambition" to sing for him.

Bethany Fenton, 5, from Gloucestershire, performed Twinkle Twinkle Little Star for him on Saturday. She died yesterday with her family at her side.

Birthday blues for Kym's beau



CORRIE star Kym Marsh has put her wedding to former Hollyoaks actor Jamie

Lomas on hold due to work commitments.

The former Hear'Say singer said: "The wedding was to take place during the same week as Coronation Street's 50th birthday, which would have meant I'd have been very busy."

Fortuna waltzes off dance show



US star Brian Fortuna is to quit the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing show after changes to the format.

The BBC has recruited three new male dancers to the show this year, with Fortuna offered a role in a new professional group, which would have seen him removed from the mentoring role which saw him partnered with celebrities.

£18M plan for derelict 'Greek' Thomson building



A-LISTED HALLS TO BE HOTEL

EXCLUSIVE

By **VIVIENNE NICOLL** and **GRAEME MURRAY**

A N £18 MILLION plan will see the transformation of one of Glasgow's architectural gems into a 136-bedroom hotel.

For 30 years the Egyptian Halls in Union Street have lain mostly empty and partly derelict.

But all that is about to change with plans to convert the A-listed Alexander 'Greek' Thomson designed former warehouse into a swish hotel.

Cash will come from the Better Glasgow Fund which was set up two years ago to fund regeneration and the protection of historic buildings. It is hoped the hotel will act as a springboard for the wider regeneration of Union Street.

On Friday, Glasgow councillors will be asked to contribute £1m towards the cost of the scheme from the Better Glasgow Fund.

Union Street Investments own the historic building which is now regarded as

being at risk. The firm has agreed that Derbyshire-based Longrose Buccleuch will manage the building with the hotel franchise being taken over by the Accor group. It already operates 850 hotels in nearly 100 countries.

Derek Souter of Union Street Investments said: "This is fantastic news for Glasgow and Union Street and would also be a significant boost for Glasgow's construction industry."

"As well as creating more than 60 construction and 80 full and part-time jobs when trading, it will preserve Scotland's architectural heritage."

The Egyptian Halls are considered by many to be architect Alexander 'Greek' Thomson's finest building.

Over the past 30 years, various plans to refurbish the Halls have been frustrated by the fact it had a large number of individual owners.

The city council eventually stepped in on behalf of majority owner Union Street Properties and began preparing compulsory purchase orders for the rest of the building. As a result

all the other owners agreed to sell up and Union Street Properties now owns the entire building.

The company, Historic Scotland and the council looked at options for the Halls including keeping the facade and demolishing everything behind it, adding a rooftop extension, or flattening the building and redeveloping the site.

The council is anxious to see this Grade A building returned to productive use

A report to councillors, says: "Given the status of the building and its importance to the heritage of Glasgow, USP has been advised demolition/redevelopment would not be supported by the council or Historic Scotland."

But studies show no other options are financially viable. The option which shows the smallest financial loss involves shops at basement and ground floor levels and a hotel on the first to fourth floors with the addition of a rooftop extension.



The part of the hotel in the existing building would be three star with the new extension four star.

The report adds: "Historic Scotland appears to accept compromise is necessary and that without some radical design changes to the building no refurbishment will take place and the deterioration will continue."

"The initial development appraisal suggests the development will cost approximately £18m but will show a loss of £5m based on the estimated returns."

"There is therefore no prospect of proceeding

without external funding support."

Union Street Properties is in the process of raising £17m and has asked the city council to provide the other £1m.

Steve Inch, the council's executive director of development and regeneration, said: "The council has been anxious to see this important Grade A listed building restored and returned to productive use for many years."

"We hope our proposed financial support will bolster the regeneration of Union Street."

aims to put new heart into city centre site



■ The plan would create a hotel from the building which has lain derelict for almost 30 years



■ Derek Souter says the project will create more than 60 construction jobs and 80 jobs once completed

The council is likely to draw up a legal agreement allowing it to claw back cash if the building costs are not as high as expected or if it is sold on for above its estimated cost.

Garin Davies of Longrose Buccleuch said: "We assess many project opportunities and this is one which is near the top of the list we want to become involved with."

Neil Baxter, secretary of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, said: "This is a building of the first importance, not simply in Glasgow or Scotland but in European terms."

Probe told of pressure on inspections

But care home had more than 20 visits

A BUILDING control expert told the inquiry into the deaths of 14 OAPs at a care home the process of inspecting buildings had become "devalued" by pressure to rush through applications.

But Thomas Sorbie said Rosepark Care Home in Uddingston - where the deaths occurred in 2004 - had received more than 20 site inspections, an unusually high number.

Mr Sorbie had told a Fatal Accident Inquiry in Motherwell that council league tables put pressure on inspectors.

He said site visits by inspectors had reduced dramatically over the years from the early 1990s and this was a major problem by the start of this century.

One chief executive he knew had quipped that "warrants (for new buildings) mean jobs", the inquiry was told, and that with limited resources inspectors were pushed into



processing applications. "There just isn't the same emphasis on inspection as there was before," he said.

Mr Sorbie said the inspections at Rosepark appeared mainly to have been early in the construction process, meaning most took place before ventilation and other fire-stopping measures would have been in place.

He had earlier told the inquiry that a site inspector appeared to have missed problems with the building's ventilation system, such as the absence of any fire dampers, the automatic closing systems that could have blocked the passage of heat and smoke through the premises.

The inquiry, in Motherwell, continues.

Autism link to babies born a week early

BABIES born a week early are more prone to develop a series of learning difficulties such as autism, and deafness.

A study of more than 400,000 children by researchers at Glasgow University showed that those born at 39 weeks were more likely to need help at school compared with babies who spent 40 weeks in the womb.

The results "suggest deliveries should ideally wait until 40 weeks of gestation because even a baby born at 39 weeks... has an increased risk of special educational needs compared with a baby born a week later".

Around a third of UK births take place at 37 to 39 weeks as mothers choose earlier deliveries for non-medical reasons.

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