

# Curse of the Egyptian Halls

By **Thomas Hornall**

ONE of the most iconic buildings in Scotland, designed by one of the country's most celebrated architects, is facing a hugely uncertain future.

Unlike the fire-hit Glasgow School of Art, which has been promised millions in public money, the city's Egyptian Halls has been left on the brink of demolition by years of red tape.

Alexander "Greek" Thomson's creation has been described as "a building of first importance, not simply in Glasgow or Scotland, but in European terms" by the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland.

It is owned by Union Street Properties, and Glasgow City Council, Historic Scotland and the Scottish Government are public stakeholders. Planning permission has been

**IGNORED:** The decaying Egyptian Halls in Glasgow has been covered by hoardings showing how it could look. Meanwhile, funding for the city's Art School is getting celebrity backing

Pictures: JAMES WILLIAMSON and CRAIG WATSON

## Iconic city building is being left to rot

granted to transform the upper floors into a hotel, but the developers cannot go ahead with the estimated £18million refurbishment without public backing.

A project insider said: "There has been an inability for the last 16 years to get the council, Historic Scotland and the government to sit down and plan this project.

"In 1998 the costs were a quarter of what they are now and none of them will take the blame. We've not had a penny of grant funding. Historic Scotland offered £1.65million - the

ground floor deficit alone is £8.5million - just as a fig leaf to get themselves out of a problem.

"A few weeks ago the Scottish ministers were all running around the Art School intervening there, and yet we're in a state now where the council is threatening demolition."

Last week, it emerged that Brad Pitt and Peter Capaldi will spearhead efforts to raise £20million for the Art School, with Westminster and Holyrood pledging cash support.

Architect George Morrison said a similar effort is needed to save the Egyptian Halls, on the city's Union Street.

He added: "We have offered many times that all parties identify the problems and work together to resolve them."

A council spokesman said they were "acutely aware" of the importance of the Egyptian Halls and were continuing to seek a solution.



What a mortgage should be