



2019

MEDIA COVERAGE



Plea to save jewel of city architecture

Charlie Parker

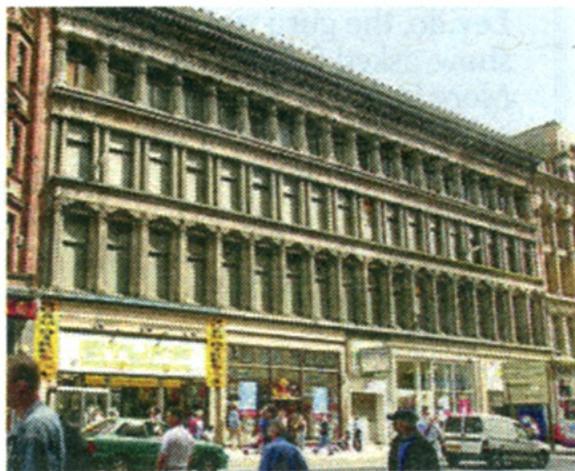
An architectural masterpiece in central Glasgow that has been empty for decades has been named among Europe's most at-risk buildings, adding to fears it may soon be beyond repair.

The Egyptian Halls, a category A building on Union Street, are seen as the finest work of Alexander Thomson. Built in the early 1870s for an iron manufacturer, its upper floors have been mothballed for 40 years.

Business owners have claimed that besides shops on the ground floor it is a refuge for beggars and drug dealers.

It has been shortlisted for a European programme that protects important architecture. If it is selected the Europa Nostra scheme will send experts to Glasgow to plan a restoration.

Campaigners can make their case until March, when the shortlist will be cut from 14 buildings to seven. A spokesman for Derek Souter, the owner, said that he hoped "an extraordinary solution can be facilitated". Glasgow city council said it had worked with successive owners for years.



The 150-year-old Egyptian Halls in Glasgow have been empty for 40 years

The Egyptian Halls - is on the shortlist for Europa Nostra 2020 Most Endangered Award- not surprising given 85% of the structure now needs replaced!

BUT IT'S MAGNIFICENT FAÇADE CAN IT STILL BE PRESERVED BUT TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!

This is a **legacy issue dating back 40 years**, which is how long the Upper Floors of the Egyptian Halls have been vacant and the fundamental non reconciled issues have seen FOUR approved Planning Applications founder these past 23 years. So all GCC, Scot Govt, co owners and heritage stakeholders need to collaborate so an **extraordinary solution can be facilitated to save an extraordinary building.**

1) And now given the Egyptian Halls has been shortlisted for the Europa Nostra award, which is fantastic news and all credit to Scott/Brigit/Sally/Mark at the ATS for their unstinting and steely pragmatism and long hours to achieve this And given it is being mooted there *should be a lecture to speak about the project in partnership with Europa Nostra UK, ATS and SPAB?* And for sure this will be encouraged to be scheduled ASAP and all stakeholders I'm sure will be invited to both attend and participate as well including ATS/AHSS/RIAS/GBPT/ SPAB/EUROPA NOSTRA/NGS as well as GCC-HES-SCOT GOVT.

2) Having also attended Friday past at the NGS the wonderful exhibition of entries for the *Reimagining the Egyptian Halls* competition which involved ATS/NGS/RIAS which attracted 80 entries from across the world (USA, Brazil, India, Philippines, Edinburgh, Polmont and of course Glasgow), with 20 on display including 1) *Museum of Slavery –A CITY PLAN- HLF PROJECT FOR SURE* 2) *new school of architecture* 3) *education–flexible work space!!* 4– *housing* 5) *conceptual thinking*. Many interested heritage supporters asked me time after time what was to happen with the Egyptian Halls.

3) And now given GCC and HES have been issued the Will Rudd Davidson survey, which provides the most detailed and comprehensive review of the existing structure there has been underpinned by robust sampling, intrusive investigations, analysis and assessment. And an immediate comparison is with the Year 2000 scheme, which was to **preserve the Egyptian Halls 100%, now cannot be achieved due to circa 85% requiring to be replaced/demolished i.e. Rear wall/roof/all floors, leaving only the magnificent façade which then cannot self support itself.** So one would surmise the Egyptian Halls would surely be on the final shortlist given the now parlous, time sensitive structural unpredictability.

4) We're also on record long and frequent stating GCC DRS Officers did not create this now toxic financial and cultural legacy and neither did the current elected Council but have somehow to find a solution that preserves the façade of this Grade A architectural masterpiece that should have been preserved by mid 2002 but for GCC and Historic Scotland errors of judgment circa 1998-2000.

5) There is a FIFTH Planning Application to be scoped/developed/funded/approved led by the combined WRD-TMP- ICA-SAVILLS team and this is already underway. And I'm 100% sure GCC DRS and HES would be much, much happier to be working towards the achievement of this as opposed to other non-Regeneration issues which have become the main focus of activity these past few years.

And today despite the challenges faced both in terms of accelerating structural decline and Commercial non-viability the position of the investors/standard security holders is still **to realise the Preservation of and return to commercial sustainability of the Egyptian Halls** at the least cost to the Public purse in conjunction with a fair and commensurate return for the "significant expenditure" has invested since mid 1998 and which GCC also acknowledged, nearly a decade ago in correspondence to Culture Minister Hyslop.

SO EARLY 2020 LET'S ALL SAVE THE FAÇADE FIRST AND THEN ASK WHY A SIMPLE AMENDMENT STATED TO CAUSE ONLY A FEW MONTHS DELAY HAS CAUSED A DELAY 100 TIMES "A FEW MONTHS"

Home > News > December 2019 > Egyptian Halls ranked among Europe's most endangered buildings

Egyptian Halls ranked among Europe's most endangered buildings

December 12 2019

SHARE | Send to friend

The Egyptian Halls in Glasgow has been recognised as being among the seven most endangered buildings in Europe after finding itself on an ignominious shortlist of 14 at risk buildings compiled by heritage organisation Europa Nostra.

Draped in scaffolding for the past decade the A-listed landmark was designed by Alexander 'Greek' Thomson has been mired in a long-running dispute between its owners and the city council over public funding for its restoration.

Now the Alexander Thomson Trust have until March to make the case for a spot in the final seven which, if successful, would see the Union Street site will play host to a delegation from Europa Nostra who would review its current condition and will work with relevant parties to help break the logjam.

The society recently revealed the results of an [open competition](#) to reimagine the historic warehouse as an art gallery, community centre, museum or school.

An online petition urging action from Glasgow City Council has drawn over [1,000 signatories](#) after the authority threatened [enforcement action](#).



Like 2 people like this. Sign Up to see what your friends like.

21 Comments



Partick Bateman on 12 Dec 2019 at 11:21 PM

This really needs a US Senate style hearing where everyone involved in the whole fiasco, or at least the ones still alive, can get publicly faulted over the coils for their object failures to act.

I think blaming private owners will in the long run get us nowhere as we know what happened from our own eyes to suggest that we'd look at it.

The public ownership process involving a community trust is a good idea.

It's a shame that the council has not been more proactive in this regard.

Like us on Facebook
Become a fan and share
Like 1.5K

News Archive

2020
2019
December
November
October
September
August
July
June
May
April
March
February
January
2018
2017
2016
2015
2014
2013
2012
2011
2010
2009
2008
2007
2006
2005
2004
2003
2002
2001
2000

Council ready to step in to save Egyptian Halls as sands run dry

Mark Macaskill

July 14 2019, 12:01am, The Sunday Times

Property developer Derek Souter warned in 2015 that the Egyptian Halls may have to be

Council chiefs in Glasgow are poised to take over an iconic building in an escalating dispute with a Dundee property developer.

Derek Souter was told last month to produce a plan for urgent repairs to the Egyptian Halls, an architectural masterpiece regarded as one of Alexander “Greek” Thomson’s finest designs.

The deadline expired on Wednesday but Souter, who has owned the building for more than a decade, disputes sole responsibility for the water damage to the four-storey structure.

It is understood that civic officials could issue a defective buildings notice, under powers introduced in 2014 following a member’s bill introduced by David Stewart, a Labour MSP. It allows local authorities to recover expenses incurred in undertaking repairs to dangerous or defective buildings. The move would be the latest chapter in a long-running saga.

Souter claims the structure of Egyptian Halls, built almost 150 years ago, has been deteriorating since the 1980s and that the council must share the cost of renovations that are estimated to run into millions.

Planning permission was awarded in 2012 for a 114-bed hotel on the site, but that project has not gone further.

Souter warned in 2015 that the dilapidated building on Glasgow’s Union Street may have to be demolished after a failed £5m lottery bid to fund renovations. Neighbouring business owners claim property values have nose-dived because the Egyptian Halls has been clad in “unsightly” scaffolding for a decade.

In February this year, amid concern over the fate of the building, Glasgow council was asked to brief the Scottish parliament’s research centre. The briefing indicated that attempts since 2016 to negotiate repairs to the building had failed.

“We are now considering our next steps in regard to the Egyptian Halls,” said a spokesman for Glasgow council. “We have done everything in our power to support this project and acted appropriately at each stage. We have supported the potential development of the building for a very long time now and continue to try to work with the owner to make the best and fullest use of this significant piece of Glasgow’s built heritage.”

Souter, who co-owns the Egyptian Halls with two business partners, said he is seeking a meeting with Glasgow council. It has been protected as a category A listed building since 1966.

Sands shift for owner of Egyptian Halls in Glasgow

Dundee developer is given until Wednesday to come up with a plan to repair the listed building in Glasgow

Mark Macaskill

July 7 2019, 12:01am, The Sunday Times

The structure has been in a state of disrepair for decades. A property developer accused by Scotland's largest council of neglecting an architectural masterpiece has been told to carry out urgent and costly repairs or face enforcement action.

The building was designed by Alexander "Greek" Thomson.

The Egyptian Halls, a 150-year-old A-listed building on Glasgow's Union Street, was designed by Alexander "Greek" Thomson and is regarded as his finest creation.

The four-storey structure has been empty and unloved for decades; its grand interiors are being ravaged by water leaks and its facades eroded by bird droppings. Business owners claim that, apart from several retail outlets on the ground floor, the building is a refuge for beggars and a site for drug deals.

Derek Souter, a Dundee entrepreneur who co-owns the Egyptian Halls with two investors, has been given a deadline of Wednesday to produce a maintenance plan. Civic officials are demanding that he remove scaffolding that has covered the building for almost a decade.

Souter maintains that Glasgow city council failed to carry out repairs it was liable for between 1996 and 2010 and has threatened to demolish the building. He claims to have been banned from council premises and said on Friday that he is "contemplating" legal action in Edinburgh's Court of Session.

"My preference, however, would be to engage with the council, openly and transparently. I believe if that happens, then the objective, which is to preserve the building, can be achieved," he said.

This year, Glasgow city council officials drew up a document chronicling the Egyptian Halls dispute. It asserts that Souter has failed to honour his civic duty to maintain the building since acquiring it more than a decade ago. Part of the report states that in 2014, urgent repairs were identified to prevent rainwater penetrating the building and to protect ledges from pigeon faeces.

"After repeated requests from the council, the owner undertook some basic maintenance work to the property during summer 2016. However, these did not assure [us] that the building is being adequately maintained. The works had not been carried out thoroughly or comprehensively," the report states.

The document suggests that Souter wrongly claimed the council was prepared to hand over more than £6m towards redeveloping the building when he applied for lottery funding. Noting Souter's bid for lottery cash in 2015, the report states that "the council has not committed any funds to the project, nor was the council formally approached by the applicant in this respect".

The document, written in February, concludes that officials are considering enforcement action against Souter and that a full structural survey of the Egyptian Halls has been commissioned.

The four-storey building is considered Thomson's finest creation.

"Souter has been holding the council to ransom for years," said a source at the local authority.

Robert Vaughan, a solicitor who has an office on Union Street, said: “What’s happened to the building is a disgrace. It should be a tourist attraction, not a hotspot for criminals and delinquents.”

Glasgow city council said a list of concerns about the building’s deterioration were set out for Souter in 2016. “Since then, there has been no meaningful maintenance of the building. We wrote again to Mr Souter in June giving him 28 days to propose how he will undertake essential maintenance. If he fails to produce any such proposals by July 10, we will consider how best to use available legislation to compel work to be carried out.”