

Fears over fall of the Egyptians

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exclusive another Alexander "Greek" Thomson building is under threat despite a #3m restoration scheme planned as part of Glasgow's celebrations of its year as UK City of Architecture, 1999. The Egyptian Halls in Union Street, dubbed the most magnificent of Greek Thomson's commercial designs, are the subject of a compulsory purchase order by the city council. However, it was confirmed yesterday that one of the former owners, whose original stake in the building was less than 50%, has mounted an eleventh-hour legal challenge against the order. **The appeal is being supported by Mr Tom Dyer, who claims a "development interest" in the property. Mr Dyer, a former racehorse trainer and accountant, was found guilty in March of professional misconduct by the Institute of Chartered Accountants' Disciplinary Committee.** Restoration work has now been postponed pending the appeal, which is unlikely to be heard at the Court of Session for at least 10 months, according to the Alexander Thomson Society. It fears that winter will have taken an irreparable toll on the property by then. Society chairman Gavin Stamp said of any delay in the legal process: "It is most alarming because, when the matter is finally resolved, the necessary grants may have to be renegotiated, if still available. "In addition, the agreed end user may well have lost patience and moved on. Above all, there is the real risk that in its present state the Egyptian Halls cannot survive another bad winter." Mr Stamp also questioned if Mr Dyer and others could raise the #2.3m required to refurbish the building. He added: "What is certain, however, is that the future of the Egyptian Halls is in jeopardy and may thus make a mockery of Glasgow's Year of Architecture and Design. The major Thomson exhibition planned for 1999 could be marked by the loss of one of the architect's finest creations." In April, the city council secured #100,000 towards restoring the Egyptian Halls, and proposals have been agreed with tenants and a potential occupier of the abandoned upper floors. The council is supported by Historic Scotland and other relevant bodies, while the compulsory purchase order was confirmed by the Scottish Secretary. The appeal has thrown a spanner in the works, with time now running out to restore the halls as centrepiece of the Thomson exhibition, let alone as part of year of architecture celebrations. In March, Mr Dyer was fined #5000 and ordered to pay costs of #18,000 after an investigation by the Institute of Chartered Accountants into allegations that he cheated a bankrupt and his creditors out of an estimated #80,000. Mr Dyer, convicted at Dundee Sheriff Court of assaulting a business colleague in 1995, was also suspended from the institute for three years. The punishment took place despite an attempt by Mr Dyer to obtain a Court of Session interdict against the disciplinary proceedings. Last night, a city council spokesman dismissed a potential 10-month gap in hearing the former owner's appeal as speculation. He added: "Anything which has to be done to avoid further erosion of the property will be done." That could involve billing owners for urgent work. Mr Stamp said the Alexander Thomson Society will settle for the building being saved, even if refurbishment cannot be completed in 1999. However, he argued: "The slowness of the legal process is failing Glasgow, its citizens and its historic architecture." Mr Dyer, who is understood to be considering an appeal against the accountants' disciplinary actions, could not be contacted.