



SCOTTISH CIVIC TRUST

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Funding secured to help save Glasgow's at-risk Egyptian Halls

Conservation experts fighting for the restoration of a Glasgow architectural masterpiece have secured funding to develop a plan for the building's future.

The Egyptian Halls working group, led by the Scottish Civic Trust and composed of experienced developers, architects and conservation experts, has secured funding from Glasgow City Heritage Trust and the Architectural Heritage Fund to develop a business plan for the restoration of Glasgow's A-listed Egyptian Halls.

Egyptian Halls was designed by Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, a Scottish architect of international stature, from 1870 to 1872. Originally designed as a commercial building that welcomed thousands through its doors, the building's balanced, colonnaded facade is acknowledged as a masterclass in architectural detailing.

Although a work of artistic genius by one of Scotland's greatest architects, Egyptian Halls has been lying empty for decades. In 2020, the building was shortlisted as one of Europe's 'fourteen most endangered buildings' by Europa Nostra, a pan-European heritage organisation.

Securing funding for a business plan is a key milestone for the Egyptian Halls working group, which was formed in May 2021 to investigate how the building could be refurbished, reused and reintegrated into Glasgow's urban fabric.

The working group has appointed Community Enterprise Scotland, an organisation with a proven track record of drafting effective business plans for major built environment projects, to create the business plan.

Fiona Sinclair, Chair of the Egyptian Halls working group, said;

"Alexander "Greek" Thomson's Egyptian Halls on Union Street has long been a worrying building at risk, and yet the relatively open-plan nature of its floor plates makes it ideal for a range of exciting uses. There is no shortage of ideas for the re-purposing of this iconic, internationally-significant building, but the key is to deliver an end use that is sustainable, both in business as well as energy terms.

We are hopeful that the development of a business plan will provide a realistic way forward, taking into account the changing nature of city centre buildings and the availability of funding for repairs as well as upgrading. As well as being architecturally exceptional, Egyptian Halls is importantly located next to one of the city's principal transport hubs, and surely has a role to play in addressing the climate

crisis. We are grateful to Glasgow City Heritage Trust and the Architectural Heritage Fund for supporting this next step in the process to bring this once glorious emporium back into long-term use."

Douglas Westwater, Executive Director of Community Enterprise, said;

"Community Enterprise are delighted to be involved in this exciting project to find a vision for the iconic Egyptians Halls that both has city and community benefit, while being financially viable. We are confident that, building on good work already done, a strong business plan can be put together to map the way forward."

A representative from Glasgow City Heritage Trust said:

"Glasgow City Heritage Trust are very pleased that we have been able to give a grant towards securing a future for this important heritage landmark that has been at risk from neglect for so long. The Egyptian Halls is a magnificent piece of architecture and assisting with the first step of taking it into public ownership is vital for realising a useful future for the building."

More information about Egyptian Halls and the campaign to save the building can be found at www.saveegyptianhalls.com or on Twitter [@egyptianhalls](https://twitter.com/egyptianhalls).

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For interviews and images, please contact Erin.Burke@scottishcivictrust.org.uk

Notes for editors:

About the Egyptian Halls working group

The Egyptian Halls working group was formed in May 2021 to investigate the possibility of purchase and refurbishment of the Egyptian Halls, Glasgow.

The working group is in the process of forming the Egyptian Halls SCIO, whose purpose will be to protect, rehabilitate and preserve for the benefit of the public the historical, architectural and constructional heritage comprising the properties at 84-100 Union Street Glasgow, G1 3QW, known as the Egyptian Halls.

The SCIO will be administered by Susan O'Connor, Director of the Scottish Civic Trust. Susan has considerable experience in the refurbishment of heritage buildings, having previously managed the redevelopment process of Govanhill Baths Glasgow, and the Townscape Heritage Initiative in Ayr.

The Egyptian Halls SCIO's founding trustees are:

Fiona Sinclair (Chair): Fiona is a Fellow of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, a conservation-accredited architect at advanced level and sometime author and historian. She has twice been elected President of the Glasgow Institute of Architects, is a Trustee of the Scottish Civic Trust and has been a member of the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland. She is the author of *Scotstyle – 150 Years of Scottish Architecture*; co-editor of its successor publication *Scotstyle 2016*; co-author of the RIAS Architectural Guide to North Clyde Estuary, and the Penguin Buildings of Scotland volumes Argyll and Bute and Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire. Fiona serves on the Kilallan Kirk Preservation Trust, the Alexander Thomson Society, and as a Director of the Formakin Estate Garden Company. She has worked on the care and repair of a range of historic buildings, including scheduled ancient monuments, churches, country houses, estate cottages, tenements, designed landscapes, two synagogues,

four fountains, a railway works, mediaeval town house and a malt whisky distillery. She is passionate about traditional building materials and the teaching of craft skills, and frequently collaborates with design-led architectural practices who do not have conservation accreditation in-house.

Scott Abercrombie: Scott is an associate director with John Gilbert Architects, a conservation accredited architect and full member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation. He is currently the conservation convenor of the Glasgow Institute of Architects and vice-chair of the Alexander Thomson Society. He brings his knowledge of Alexander Thomson and Egyptian Halls to the SCIO, alongside professional experience in developing complex adaptive reuse schemes centred around existing buildings.

John Mark Di Ciacca: John Mark is a Chartered Surveyor and has worked in both the private and public sectors. He has conceived and delivered several award winning projects ranging from long term gap sites through to large-scale master planning and regeneration projects. He has held many executive and non-executive directorships, playing a leading role in their governance. Over recent years he has been invited to be an External Examiner for Edinburgh Napier University, a national judge for the British Council for Offices Awards and also the Saltire Housing Awards. He is presently a Trustee of the Scottish Civic Trust and a Community Representative for the Forth Bridge World Heritage Management Group. Always keen to give something back, John Mark regularly provides pro bono advice to third sector organisations, social enterprises and charities to assist them with their property needs and strategic direction.

Murray Grigor (OBE): Murray is a film-maker, writer and exhibition designer. He founded the Friends of Toshie in 1964 with Bill Williams and Bruno del Priore to help counter Glasgow's neglect. He collaborated on Andrew McLaren Young's 1968 Edinburgh Festival Mackintosh Centenary exhibition that included his film Mackintosh. His 1970 TV programme on the planned devastation of Mackintosh's buildings was screened the evening the Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society was founded in 1973. He has created further films on Robert Adam, John Soane and Alexander Thomson; a TV programme featuring the plight of Egyptian Halls; and a Lighthouse exhibition on Thomson with Gavin Stamp, Frank Lloyd Wright, Carlo Scarpa, Charles Gwathmey and John Lautner. Grigor directed the Edinburgh Film Festival 1967-72; British Film Institute's Film Production Panel 1969-74; the National Endowment for the Arts, Design & Film in 1978; Edinburgh Festival Board 1987-91; was chairman of the Edinburgh Film Festival 1990-94; and director of Channel 4 1994-1998.

Catharine Kidd: Catharine is an experienced and professional heritage consultant dual qualified in Heritage Management and Urban Design. She has been a full Member of the Institute of Historic Buildings Conservation since 2007. She currently leads the Scotland Heritage and Townscape team at Turley, a planning and development consultancy. Catharine has provided strategic and pragmatic advice on the redevelopment and regeneration of historic buildings and townscapes for over 20 years. She has a sound understanding of the practical and commercial dynamics of bringing buildings back into viable new use. Her extensive heritage career in Scotland and the rest of the UK has involved helping commercial clients successfully navigate the complexities of historic environment designations and consenting processes; advising on regeneration frameworks for historic places; and, providing heritage project management to charities and social enterprises on grant-funded historic building and townscape projects.

John Nicolson (MP): John is the Member of Parliament for Ochil and South Perthshire. He is the SNP Westminster spokesperson for Culture and a member of the House of Commons Culture Select Committee. He sits on the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Art. Prior to this, he graduated with an MA from Glasgow University and won a Kennedy Scholarship to Harvard where he was Harkness Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government. A journalist and broadcaster by profession, he has reported for a number of the BBC's most high profile news and current affairs programmes including 'Panorama' and 'Newsnight'. He has anchored both BBC and ITV network news including BBC 'Breakfast' which he presented for a number of years. He has restored a number of listed buildings from dereliction both in London and Glasgow and is a trustee of the Spitalfields Trust and Dennis Severs' House.

Eleanor Styles: Eleanor is a Trustee of the Scottish Civic Trust and a civil service policy professional working in the Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport. Her background is in the heritage and cultural sector, having worked as a consultant with clients across the UK, gaining experience in developing and delivering a wide range of complex change management projects. Prior to this she worked as a project manager at the National Trust and gained a masters in Heritage Management in 2016.

Paul Sweeney (MSP): Paul is a Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) for the Glasgow Region, and previously served as the Labour & Co-operative MP for Glasgow North East in the House of Commons from 2017 until 2019. He is currently serving as Shadow Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation, previously Shadow Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. He is a trustee of the Glasgow City Heritage Trust and a member of Glasgow Building Preservation Trust, leading walks as part of their annual Glasgow Doors Open Days Festival for several years. With a professional background in the Clyde shipbuilding industry, Paul was also involved in the restoration of the historic former Govan shipyard head offices into the Fairfield Heritage Centre, for which he won an award in 2014. After campaigning against the demolition of Springburn Public Halls in 2012, he founded the Springburn Winter Gardens Trust, which is working to restore the nearby Springburn Winter Gardens.

More information on Egyptian Halls and the Egyptian Halls working group can be found at www.saveegyptianhalls.com

About Scottish Civic Trust

[Scottish Civic Trust](#)'s mission is to celebrate Scotland's built environment, take action for its improvement and empower its communities. The vision which drives this is thriving, beautiful and well cared for buildings and places, which help to support and sustain a high quality of life.

Founded in 1967, the Scottish Civic Trust exists to help people connect with their built heritage and take a leading role in guiding its development. In its infancy, it successfully campaigned for the restoration of Edinburgh's New Town and was instrumental in saving New Lanark – both now part of Scotland's network of six World Heritage Sites.

In addition to these major milestones, the Scottish Civic Trust initiated [Doors Open Days](#), now the largest free festival of architecture in Scotland. Doors Open Days celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2019.

About Community Enterprise

[Community Enterprise](#) (CE) is a leading social enterprise and community development consultancy and support provider with a Scotland-wide reach. They provide support across

Scotland and beyond to help make ideas a reality and are particularly supportive of the impact of heritage assets. They work with communities to build and sustain projects for the benefit of local people, and are a social enterprise themselves. 100% of CE's profits are re-invested in supporting the further growth and development of voluntary and community organisations.

About the Architectural Heritage Fund

The [Architectural Heritage Fund](#) (AHF) is a registered charity, working since 1976 to promote the conservation and sustainable re-use of historic buildings for the benefit of communities across the UK, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas.

The AHF exists to help communities find enterprising ways to revitalise the old buildings they love. AHF helps them with advice, grants and loans. AHF's support acts as a catalyst for putting sustainable heritage at the heart of vibrant local economies. For over 40 years, AHF has been the leading social investor in creating new futures for historic buildings.

About the Glasgow City Heritage Trust

[Glasgow City Heritage Trust](#) gives out almost £1million in funding each year to help people in Glasgow protect, repair and promote the city's historic buildings and places.

Through their conservation grants programmes people will enjoy, understand and care for Glasgow's historic built environment and will be able to access funding and expertise which will ensure the sustainability of the city's heritage for current and future generations.

About Europa Nostra

[Europa Nostra](#) are the leading citizens' movement to protect and celebrate Europe's cultural and natural heritage. To protect and celebrate Europe's heritage, Europa Nostra act as advocates of heritage towards policy-makers at all levels of governance, campaign to save threatened heritage sites through the 7 Most Endangered programme and promote excellence through the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards.

For further Information

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