



SCOTTISH CIVIC TRUST

PRESS RELEASE

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Calls to restore Glasgow's at-risk Egyptian Halls

Conservation experts fighting for the future of a Glasgow architectural masterpiece have announced the establishment of a charity to take forward discussions about restoration.

The A-listed Egyptian Halls are a work of artistic genius by one of Scotland's greatest architects, and are of great importance to Glasgow's urban fabric. However, the future of the building is uncertain - Egyptian Halls has been lying empty for decades and was recently shortlisted as one of Europe's 'fourteen most endangered buildings' by Europa Nostra, a pan-European heritage organisation.

A new charity is being set up with the hopes of working alongside key stakeholders to find a solution for the building. The Egyptian Halls SCIO will be composed of experienced developers, architects and conservation experts, and will be led by the Scottish Civic Trust. The Civic Trust's administration of the SCIO is sponsored through a grant from the Architectural Heritage Fund.

The Scottish Civic Trust is the national body for Scotland's civic movement and counts among its responsibilities the conservation of older buildings of distinction, where commercial interests are unable to lead. Since its inception in 1967, the Civic Trust has taken dynamic action in high-profile heritage projects, having successfully campaigned for the restoration of Edinburgh's New Town and supported the revitalisation of New Lanark.

The restoration of Egyptian Halls will enrich the city and provide an appropriately high-quality welcome to visitors and Glaswegians alike entering Glasgow's historic city centre from Glasgow Central Station. The Egyptian Halls SCIO aims to restore, develop and safeguard the building so that it can be used, shared and enjoyed by future generations.

Dr Susan O'Connor, Director of the Scottish Civic Trust, said;

"Located right at the heart of the entry to the city on Union Street, the condition of the Halls has long been a matter of concern for the Civic Trust, and we are delighted to take the lead in finding a new solution for this Glasgow gem."

Egyptian Halls was designed by Alexander 'Greek' Thomson from 1870 and completed in 1872 for the iron manufacturer James Henderson Robertson. The Halls are a uniquely stunning exercise in utility and artistry. Originally designed as a commercial building that welcomed thousands through its doors, the building's balanced, colonnaded facade is rightly acknowledged as a masterclass in the application of architectural detailing.

Today Egyptian Halls stands as one of the remaining masterpieces designed by Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, a Scottish architect of international stature produced by Victorian Glasgow. Thomson was known for his Graeco-Egyptian style, which earned him his nickname.

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

Notes for editors:

About the Egyptian Halls SCIO

A new charitable body, the Egyptian Halls SCIO, is in the process of being formed to investigate the possibility of purchase and refurbishment of the Egyptian Halls, Glasgow.

The Egyptian Halls SCIO's purpose is 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:

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.

Fiona Sinclair: 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, medieval 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.

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 SCIO 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 the Alexander Thomson Society

[The Alexander Thomson Society](#) was founded in 1991 by Dr Gavin Stamp to celebrate the life and work of one of Glasgow's most influential nineteenth century architects. Thomson

(1817-1875) was a prolific architect designing numerous villas, terraces, tenements and commercial buildings as well as four churches all either in or around Glasgow.

The Society is dedicated to the protection, conservation and promotion of the architect's surviving buildings by way of monitoring their present condition, holding an annual series of talks around Thomson's birthday on April 9th, lectures to other societies and academic institutions, publications and a number of guided walks throughout the city and its environs.

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 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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