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Glasgow's Egyptian Halls will crumble if advertising banned, says owner

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Retail



The Egyptian Halls, designed by the renowned Victorian architect Alexander "Greek" Thomson, has been under wraps after falling into disrepair
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Income from advertising on scaffolding at the Egyptian Halls in Glasgow is paying towards the building's upkeep, its owner has said after the city council served a stopping order.

The Egyptian Halls is one of the finest achievements of Alexander "Greek" Thomson, the Victorian architect who was born in Stirlingshire.

Derek Souter of Union Street Properties [acquired a stake in the building in 2000](#). He said the action by the council was unfair and that the income paid for the scaffolding and maintenance. If he does not defend the action the council will be able to obtain a decree to have the ads removed.



The building originally featured shops, a lecture room and a central hall for exhibitions of paintings and antiquities

"An upgrade programme has to be funded via ad hoarding income or grant funding," Souter told The Times. "Given pressure on the public purse I would have thought a source of long-term income should not be dispensed with too hastily." He is seeking legal advice.

Paul Sweeney, a Labour MSP and a trustee of the Scottish Civic Trust working group, said time was of the essence for Souter and the council to find a solution. He said that if advertising revenue from was supporting basic maintenance it might be premature to insist on removal.

Souter has until August 14 to go to the Court of Session. The council issued the order in July after Souter was refused planning permission for the adverts.



The owner, Derek Souter, claims advertising helps to pay for the upkeep of the building
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Souter would not confirm the amount of advertising revenue but said it was exaggerated. Adverts on the General Post Office in George Square are thought to have made the owners £70,000 a month but Souter said his earned less than that a year.

The council said it was impossible to comment on Souter's claim without detail. It said: "The bottom line is that there is no planning permission in place to display the advertising as confirmed by the Court of Session. It is the responsibility of owners of historic – or otherwise – buildings to maintain their property."

Susan Aitken, the council leader, said she was [keen to work with anyone](#) with a creative business plan for the building but that the Egyptian Halls have been the biggest barrier to the council improving Union Street. She said the stopping order meant there was finally movement.

Sweeney said: "Recent structural investigations by conservation-accredited engineers and a feasibility study for renovation works have demonstrated that the category A-listed building is still salvageable.



Glasgow council says the building has been the biggest barrier to improvements to Union Street
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"Time is now of the essence for the current owners and Glasgow city council to find a way to cut through the long-term impasse, particularly as I understand that there is a commercial interest by a third party in taking such a project forward.

"If it can be evidenced that revenue from the advertising scaffolding is supporting basic maintenance costs . . . then it may be premature to insist on its removal until an approved plan for restoration of the building is in place."

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