



# Dundee developer asks culture secretary to help save famous Glasgow building



by Stefan Morkis

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A picture of the exterior of the Egyptian Halls taken in 2010.

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A Dundee property developed has asked the Scottish Government to help break the deadlock that has left one of the country's most important buildings to rot.

Derek Souter, together with fellow investors Kelvin Kerr and Duncan Souter, has already ploughed millions of pounds in to Egyptian Halls on Union Street in Glasgow.

Designed by Alexander "Greek" Thomson, the building has been described by the Royal Institute of Architects as being of "international importance".

Thomson, who was born 200 years ago tomorrow (Sunday) is one of the most important architects in Scottish history.

However, the Egyptian Halls has been left to fall into disrepair for more than 30 years.

Although it occupies a prime site opposite Central Station, the buildings is currently covered in scaffolding.

Mr Souter and his partners want to transform the building into a hotel and shops at a cost of around £18 million but need the help of public grants to ensure the work is completed.

Although Historic Scotland and Glasgow City Council (GCC) had both previously offered six-figure grants to restore the building, work stalled due to an amendment attached to a compulsory purchase order previously imposed on the building by GCC.

Now Mr Souter has written to Scottish Government culture secretary Fiona Hyslop in a bid to save help save the building, which was built between 1870 and 1872.

Mr Souter said: "It's a complex problem but it needs resolved.

"Everybody is frustrated.

"We need Glasgow City Council at a senior level and the Scottish Government at a senior level to work together to help save this architectural masterpiece."

Mr Souter said if the plans go ahead, the building, which would include a four-star hotel and would deliver around £10 million in business rates over its first 25 years of operation.

He said public money would help guarantee the future of the historic A-listed building as the only other way to make money from the site would be to demolish it and build a new structure on the land.

He said: "We are in this to make money but what we've said is we want to save the building and to deliver it a the lowest cost possible to the public purse."

Mr Souter added: "We have tried for nine years to get the Scottish Government involved but have had zero dialogue. They are just not interested."

The Scottish Government has been asked to comment.

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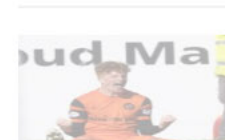
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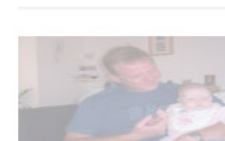
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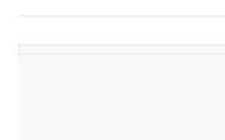
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