

Brunton Theatre closed as 'crumbling concrete' found in roof

East Lothian's main theatre venue remains closed after safety concerns were raised over its roof.

The Brunton Theatre, in Musselburgh, shut down all its performance areas while surveys are carried out to assess the building.

East Lothian Council, which owns the building, said it had found Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) had been used in roof slabs at The Brunton in the form of Siporex roof slabs.

The lightweight concrete material which was used in construction between the 1950s and 1980s has been identified as a concern by Government because it can crack and crumble.

Local authorities across Scotland have been carrying out checks on all public buildings to identify where the material has been used and take any action needed.

A council spokesperson said: "Structural issues have now been identified with roof areas at the Brunton covering all performance venues, the venue one bar area and Esk Rooms where RAAC in the form of Siporex roof slabs cover these particular building areas.

"From a safety perspective these areas now require to be removed from use to enable further survey work to be carried out. The offices and the Bistro are not affected and so remain open for use.

"We will endeavour to provide an update when possible and are working to support the Brunton Theatre Trust with its

programme of events and performance commitments through consideration of alternative venues.”

The Brunton Theatre was opened in Musselburgh in June 1971 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and underwent extensive refurbishment in the late Nineties, overseen by the council.

As well as hosting the biggest pantomime in the county each Christmas, it plays hosts to a wide range of performers, acting and dance troupes and holds regular live streaming events.

Michael Stitt, chair of The Brunton Trust, said no performance had been cancelled as the venue worked to find alternative places to host them.

He said: “We are determined not to disappoint our customers or performers therefore we will not be cancelling any of our programme at this stage.

“We ask you to bear with us as we work to find alternative venues and dates for the events you are booked in for between now and July.

“Brunton Theatre Trust has a long history of staging professional arts and entertainment events in East Lothian and we are now working with our partners to ensure that the shows will go on!”

Musselburgh ward councillors said the temporary closure of the theatre was disappointing and would be felt by the staff, performers and wider community.

East Lothian deputy provost Andrew Forrest said: “It is disappointing it has happened but health and safety has to come first.

“I am disappointed for the staff who work really hard. This has been the best season at The Brunton post Covid and they are doing everything they can to find alternative venues and keep it going.

“The Brunton is a small theatre but you feel part of the show when you are there, it has a real atmosphere.

"I am also concerned for some of the businesses around the theatre where people might go for a meal before or after a show."

Councillor Ruairidh Bennett, fellow ward member said: "I am saddened at the temporary closure of the Brunton theatre especially at a time when so much is on.

"I share the disappointment of the hard working theatre staff, performers and customers at the closure of what is a great entertainment venue for the town and further afield, but health and safety is a priority and must come first.

"I hope the theatre is reopened as soon as possible so people can go back to enjoy the performances on offer."

Cllr Cher Cassini said: "I use the Brunton facilities a lot myself, so I will really miss them during the period of refurbishment.

"However, we are committed to ensuring that we support these necessary works on the Brunton building.

"It's a real asset to the community and we all want the very best outcome."

The Brunton programme over the next month includes the return of Elvis impersonator Rob Kingsley, who is originally from the county, with his show A Vision of Elvis this weekend and Eighties pop icon Paul Young next month as well as Lulu and G4.

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency. It is funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector (in Edinburgh that is Reach plc (the publisher behind Edinburgh Live and The Daily Record) and used by many qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover news about top-tier local authorities and other public service

organisations.



Brunton Theatre