

Council may be asked for more funding for new concert hall

The City of Edinburgh Council has been asked to pay more to help with the construction of the city's first purpose-built concert hall in more than 100 years.

Officials say they have had "informal conversations" with Impact, the charity behind the Dunard Centre development, about increased costs of the 1,000-seat city centre venue now being built with monies from the Dunard Fund, and funding from the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal.

Initially the local authority contributed £5million but was recently "approached to add to its contribution," a new report has revealed.

As work commenced on the site off St Andrew Square in February, council leader Cammy Day said he "couldn't see" any more money coming from the city's coffers for the project.

He confirmed this week there are "no plans for a further capital contribution at this time," adding the council "will continue to monitor the project closely as it develops".

The music venue, expected to open by 2026 and cost at least £75million, will be the biggest built in Edinburgh since the Usher Hall in 1914.

As well as being the new home of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra it will host classical, pop, rock, jazz and electronica performances.

The Dunard Centre's auditorium, located behind the Royal Bank of Scotland's Dundas House, has been designed by David Chipperfield Architects and Nagata Acoustics, which has worked on world-class concert halls in Los Angeles, Paris and Hamburg.

Plans were passed by councillors in late 2021 after being amended to reduce the building's height, in response to an objection from Nuveen, owners of St James Quarter next door.

Work to demolish a 1960s RBS annexe and clear the site has been underway since early this year.

In preparation of the venue's construction beginning, Impact Scotland, the charity responsible for building and running the Dunard Centre, launched a £15million fundraising campaign to meet unfunded costs.

The Council's £5million contribution is not expected to be required within the current financial year, a report to the Finance and Resources Committee stated.

But the report added that the project is "facing increased costs and the council has been approached to add to its contribution".

Council officers said they have had "informal conversations" with Impact about the extra funds being sought and more details would be available in the New Year. They added the charity had raised £30million this year alone.

Meanwhile the UK and Scottish governments are each paying £10million.

Whether the authority will be in a position to fork out more toward the scheme remains unknown, as it already faces a funding gap of over £50million next year.

Cllr Day said: "As is the case with many projects of this scale, we're aware of increases in costs. We remain in close

dialogue with the project, along with the UK Government, Scottish Government and other key stakeholders.

“We’re aware and remain supportive of the excellent fundraising campaign that is underway, and we await the outcome of commercial negotiations around the project.

“The council has no plans for a further capital contribution at this time but will continue to monitor the project closely as it develops.”

by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter



The work began on the Dunard Centre on 6 February with a visit from UK and Scottish Government Ministers as well as the Council Leader to listen to Ae Fond Kiss by Su-a Lee Assistant Principal Cello at Scottish Chamber Orchestra ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter

