

Council set to demolish Brunton Theatre at a cost of £3.6m

A £3.6million plan to demolish East Lothian's main theatre venue will be put to councillors next week after officers said the cost of repairs was 'unaffordable'.

The future of the Brunton Theatre, in Musselburgh, has been in doubt since it was closed in March last year after reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) was discovered in the venue.

A report to East Lothian Council next week will ask elected members to agree to mothball the venue, relocating council services to a new location and carrying out work to close off its heating at a cost of up to £1.1million.

And they will be asked to approve a public consultation on the demolition of the building, opened by the late Queen Elizabeth in 1971.

The report says: "Potential remediation of the RAAC at the Brunton Hall is unaffordable and the preferred option is to demolish the building at a cost of £3.6m."

It is understood council staff in the building may be relocated into the town centre offices of Musselburgh Citizens

Advice Bureau.

The Brunton Theatre Trust has continued to offer its programme of performances and events at other venues across East Lothian since their main venue closed and this is expected to continue.

The Trust currently has a lease of Haddington Corn Exchange and a public survey was recently carried out on its behalf to gauge how people feel about alternative venues.

The report to councillors says RAAC in the roof panels of the Brunton have been assessed and it is believed the cost of repairs to reopen it are too costly while leaving them are not an option.

It says: "Whilst safety arrangements have been put in place to mitigate the risk associated with these roof panels, there have been cases of sudden failure elsewhere in the UK.

"If the roof panels were to fail, there would be a significant risk of disruption to asbestos-containing materials below, with possible release of asbestos fibres into the air. Failure of the roof panels would also be likely to make refurbishment or demolition much more complex and more expensive."

Councillors will be asked to approve recommendations in the report at a meeting on Tuesday next week.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter