

Lanthorn community centre reopens after year's delay

Livingston's Lanthorn community centre re-opened its doors this week- more than a year later than originally planned after initial refurbishment works left the building without a roof last winter.

SNP councillors won an assurance that the cost of that year's delay would be delivered to councillors next month.

The council 's property manager told this month's meeting of the Executive that the bill was being tallied up and would be made public.

The community centre which closed in 2021 after RAAC was found in its roof, reopened on Monday. Writing on its social media the council said: "The community centre will open its doors today. The café will also open today and is expected to be very busy as the menu looks amazing.

"Our library will reopen tomorrow. Our library staff are looking forward to welcoming customers back. Thank you to all those involved in getting the project completed."

The Lanthorn had been scheduled to reopen last January. The Local Democracy Reporting service revealed in the Spring that contractors had stripped off RAAC panels in the Autumn of 2023 and left the building open to the elements causing widespread

damaged to the building.

New contractors were brought in to make good last year.

At the Executive meeting on Tuesday Councillor Willie Boyle asked: "What additional costs have been attributed to this delay?"

Property and Estates Manager David Baird told the meeting: "We are awaiting the final accounts coming back in they should be back with us within the next month at the latest."

He added that the council was now in a period where snagging work was made good and added: "We are pushing the contractor and quantity surveyors to tidy up accounts as quickly as we can."

Councillor Boyle asked for assurance that user groups be kept informed. Mr Baird said that they would be. The Lanthorn steering group includes all four local councillors.

The LDRS revealed in June that what started as straight-forward removal and replacement of RAAC roofing has become a major refurbishment of the entire building – potentially adding millions of pounds to the final bill.

A firm awarded a £2m contract in October 2022 were scheduled to have finished the work by January 2024.

The Local Democracy Reporting Service revealed that the firm was given an additional £450,000 to accelerate the works, but a new £1m contract was awarded to another firm to complete the refurbishment. An architectural services contract of more than £25,000 will run until April 2025.

It was claimed in June that the Lanthorn has become a money pit for the council.

A source told the LDRS at that time: "It's been a total waste of council money. They've had people working there just trying

to make things look good, but nothing's really been achieved.

"They've basically done stuff back to front. They stripped the roof off in September and left it open to the elements. They didn't make it watertight. The water was pouring in. It just beggars belief. There was crazy stuff being done.

"The Lanthorn now needs a total refurb they'll probably not get change out of £4m."

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter