

# **The Brunton's future under the spotlight**

**Political leaders, arts representatives, and community stakeholders have convened to address the future of the Brunton, Musselburgh's cultural venue.**

The roundtable, which drew cross-party political support from MSPs including Martin Whitfield, Colin Beattie, Alison Johnston, Jeremy Balfour, Paul McLennan, and MP Douglas Alexander, heard that the building's top floor has been deemed unsafe since the pandemic, and complete mothballing is planned by June.

One person attending the meeting said: "There's no point having an International Festival City if there is nothing offered in Musselburgh, highlighting the venue's regional importance.

The estimated demolition cost stands at £3.6 million – although this figure is expected to rise – prompting urgent discussions about alternatives.

Douglas Alexander MP said: "In these often polarised times it was good to join with local representatives in a genuinely constructive cross-party meeting in North Esk Parish Church in Musselburgh to discuss the future of the Brunton Theatre

site.”

[https://twitter.com/D\\_G\\_Alexander/status/1897973511731474445](https://twitter.com/D_G_Alexander/status/1897973511731474445)  
Sarah Boyack MSP, Cllr Andy Forrest and representatives from The Brunton Trust and Creative Scotland led conversations on potential redevelopment scenarios, with a consensus forming around a community-driven approach.

Ms Boyack said after the meeting: “It was great to host a roundtable on the future of Musselburgh’s Brunton Theatre. It is critical that we ensure that Musselburgh continues to have a theatre to support art and culture across East Lothian.”

Jeremy Balfour MSP said after the meeting: “It was encouraging to have so many different voices around the table.”

Another representative said: “There will be someone in the public that will have an idea that no one has thought of yet,” underscoring the upcoming public consultation scheduled to begin within the next month. This open forum will gather community input and explore creative solutions for the historic venue.

Discussions centred on reimagining the Brunton as a multi-use arts facility which could support local artistic initiatives while attracting major productions. Additional revenue streams, including weddings and touring shows, were explored as potential sustainability measures.

The building’s deterioration has already forced staff relocations to neighboring Haddington, increasing pressure to develop a viable plan. Creative Scotland representatives acknowledged funding challenges but expressed cautious optimism about support possibilities if a cohesive strategy emerges.

Stakeholders emphasised that preserving the Brunton’s cultural identity regardless of physical changes, recognising its significance as a community cornerstone.

The meeting concluded with commitments to transparency, communication with the local community and continued collaboration as feasibility studies progress.

Additional roundtable sessions will be scheduled in coming months, ensuring the community remains informed and engaged in shaping the future of this vital cultural institution.

Foyso! Choudhury MSP said after the meeting: "The Brunton has always been known for being a vibrant community hub. Finding venues can be tough, and it is very important, as the Edinburgh International Festival attracts thousands of visitors each year, that we prioritise areas like Musselburgh."



Sarah Boyack MSP, Douglas Alexander MP and Foyso! Choudhury MSP ahead of the meeting