

**COMMITTEE:** East Lothian Council

**MEETING DATE:** 26 August 2025

**BY:** Executive Director for Place

**REPORT TITLE:** Brunton Hall Replacement Project

**REPORT STATUS:** Public

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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to reaffirm the Council's commitment to the accommodation of the arts in Musselburgh and to seek approval to explore development opportunities that could achieve this.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree the continuing commitment to ensuring accommodation of the arts in the town of Musselburgh through the exploration of opportunities to finance the replacement of the Brunton Hall.
- 2.2 Approve the development of a Prior Information Notice (PIN) to test the market for the redevelopment of the Brunton Hall site to include a theatre and performance space.
- 2.3 Approve the establishment of a project development team to further progress this proposal.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

### History of Brunton and Committee Report, October 2024

- 3.1 In October 2024, the Council approved the closure and mothballing of the Brunton Hall due to the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). At that time, the estimated cost of refurbishment and RAAC remediation was £42.912 million. The cost to demolish and build

a new facility was estimated to be £50.742 million. It was agreed that these options were unaffordable, but a commitment was made to undertake a place-based development project to prepare options for the future of service delivery ensuring accommodation of the arts in the town of Musselburgh.

#### Feedback from Place Engagement and Public Petition

- 3.2 A programme of public engagement has been undertaken, with the insights gathered informing the Musselburgh place-based development project. Key building stakeholders and community groups were invited to a series of workshops which took place from 2 April to 15 April 2025. In addition, an online survey on East Lothian Consultation Hub ran from 19 May to 29 June 2025. There were 278 responses on the Brunton Hall with 98.2% in favour of an arts facility in the town of Musselburgh.
- 3.3 Respondents were asked their thoughts on how this could be delivered. The following are examples of the type of feedback received:
- Grant funding from sources such as Scottish Government, Scottish Arts Council and National Lottery
  - Increased income from additional commercial activities such as cinema, restaurant, retail space or commercial office space
  - Common Good
  - Donations from private individuals
  - Crowd funding and public share issue
  - Community ownership, like Bellfield in Portobello
  - Corporate sponsorship.
- 3.4 Independent of the placemaking project engagement, a petition launched in October 2024 calling for a replacement for the Brunton Hall has gathered nearly 5,500 signatures.

#### Affordability – Future Financial Pressures

- 3.5 There is strong public support for the continued provision of the arts in Musselburgh. However, repairing the existing Brunton Hall is financially unviable. A replacement is necessary, but the Council's capital plan is fully committed to statutory obligations and growth-related pressures. Delivering a new facility will require an alternative funding model, potentially involving commercial finance, government support, grant funding, or a combination thereof.

### Historic Environment Scotland

- 3.6 Historic Environment Scotland (HES) launched a consultation on 31 July 2025 to seek views on whether the Brunton Hall should be listed as a building of special architectural or historic interest. In line with the Council's Standing Orders, the Council's Head of Development will respond to this consultation and provide the Council's views on this possible designation. Members of the public will also be able to respond to the consultation.

### Proposed Strategy

- 3.7 Our proposed strategy is to explore redevelopment opportunities for a new arts facility on the site of the Brunton Hall through a Prior Information Notice (PIN) issued via Public Contracts Scotland.
- 3.8 PINs are public notices used to signal to the wider market that the buyer has a specific upcoming commercial need that will require support from one or more suppliers. PINs are a useful source of information to help understand the market. Information received through the PIN can be used to establish the market appetite for development opportunities. The PIN will outline our requirements as follows:
- Redevelopment of the site to include theatre and performance space
  - Remaining part of the site can be redeveloped commercially to offset the cost of providing a theatre and performance space, subject to obtaining necessary consents.
- 3.9 Given the scale of this project, it will be necessary to set up a project development team. The project team will consist of professional officers from a range of Council services and will be chaired by the Head of Infrastructure. It will oversee further development of the replacement theatre and will provide governance to the project. It will report to the Council's Management Team on a regular basis. It will also keep Members informed on a regular basis.

### Brunton Theatre Trust

- 3.10 Engagement with the Brunton Theatre Trust will be essential to explore opportunities and develop a project brief. As the Council's ALEO partner, their involvement will be critical in shaping and informing future delivery options.

### Common Good

- 3.11 Brunton Hall is designated as a Common Good asset. Under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the Council is required to publish details of any proposed changes to such assets and consult with relevant community councils. Any opportunities arising from the Prior Information Notice (PIN) will be subject to formal consultation before any final decisions regarding the future of the site are made.

## 4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

## 5 RESOURCE AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Finance: the Council's capital plan is fully committed to funding statutory obligations and growth-related pressures. Delivering a new arts facility in Musselburgh will require an alternative funding model, potentially involving commercial finance, government support, grant funding, or a combination thereof.

5.2 Human Resources: none

5.3 Other (e.g. Legal/IT): the Brunton Hall is classified as a Common Good asset. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires the Council to publish details of any proposed changes to Common Good assets and to open these proposals to community councils for consultation.

5.4 Risk: RAAC roof panels are present at the Brunton Hall and that structural surveys have identified significant structural issues with these. Council services operating from the Brunton Hall are being relocated to alternative locations as a result.

## 6 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 **Select the statement that is appropriate to your report by placing an 'X' in the relevant box.**

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening process has been undertaken and the subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on: equality and human rights; tackling socio-economic disadvantages and poverty; climate change, the environment and sustainability; the Council's role as a corporate parent; or the storage/collection of personal data.

X

**or**

The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and impacts have been identified as follows:

Subject	Impacts identified (Yes, No or N/A)
Equality and human rights	

Subject	Impacts identified (Yes, No or N/A)
Socio-economic disadvantage/poverty	
Climate change, the environment and sustainability	
Corporate parenting and care-experienced young people	
Storage/collection of personal data	
Other	

*[Enter information on impacts that have been identified]*

The Integrated Impact Assessment relating to this report has been published and can be accessed via the Council's website:

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210602/equality\\_and\\_diversity/12014/integrated\\_impact\\_assessments](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210602/equality_and_diversity/12014/integrated_impact_assessments)

## **7 APPENDICES**

7.1 None

## **8 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 Report to East Lothian Council, 29 October 2024 – The Brunton Hall RAAC Update, Proposal for Closure and Alternative Service Delivery
- 8.2 Report to Members' Library Service, 30 November 2024 – The Brunton Hall RAAC Options Appraisal

## **9 AUTHOR AND APPROVAL DETAILS**

### **Report Author(s)**

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<b>Date</b>	26 August 2025	

**Head of Service Approval**

<b>Name</b>	Tom Reid
<b>Designation</b>	Head of Infrastructure
<b>Confirmation that IIA and other relevant checks (e.g. finance/legal) have been completed</b>	Completed
<b>Approval Date</b>	11/8/2025