

Exterior of Ashton municipal baths

An ambitious multi-million pound project to bring Ashton-under-Lyne's former municipal baths back into use has received a boost with confirmation of a £1.7million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) Heritage Enterprise programme (HE).

Designed by architects Paull and Robinson, Ashton Old Baths was built in 1870 in Italianate style of architecture. It served as municipal baths until the 1970s when it closed and has remained largely derelict and on English Heritage's 'Heritage at Risk' Register.

The project will restore the building to its former glory, with plans to create a 21st-century business premises for start-up and early stage companies in a freestanding structure within the main pool hall.

The completed development will be targeted at small and medium-sized enterprises in the digital, creative and media sectors and will benefit from the recently completed installation of dark fibre (broadband) in the area which provides the highest speeds and reliability achievable in the UK.

An exciting and extensive activity programme, delivered by Tameside Council's Culture Service, will be rolled out as part of the project. This will include providing public access to the building through open days and a permanent art interpretation. Two heritage apprenticeships, extensive volunteer opportunities and partnership working with community organisations and schools will also be key to ensuring the local community are involved with the project.

The plans are already generating a groundswell of public support, highlighted recently when the building was showcased for the first time in 40 years during the Tameside Heritage Open Weekend which saw over 500 people queuing around the building for hours to catch a glimpse of its unique heritage features.

Councillor Kieran Quinn, Executive Leader of Tameside Council, said: “This announcement is a real boost to our plans to bring this important heritage building back into use and promote economic growth in Tameside. We greatly value the support that the Heritage Lottery Fund is providing for the redevelopment of Ashton Old Baths.”

Sara Hilton, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: “Ashton Old Baths is a fantastic example of 19th-century architecture which has served and inspired generations of local residents. Its fascinating history is tightly interwoven with the social history and culture of Ashton and Tameside. We are delighted to add our support to a project which will not only ensure the building’s survival but will inspire and make a significant contribution to the local economy for years to come.”

David Smith-Milne, Managing Director of the building’s owners, property development company, PlaceFirst Ltd added: "The council has worked hard to secure this important funding which will help significantly with the viability of proposals to bring this important heritage building back into a sustainable use. We at PlaceFirst will continue to work with the council and other stakeholders on delivering those proposals."

Notes to editors

About the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

The Ashton (Old) Baths project is part financed by the English Convergence and Competitiveness European Regional Development Fund Programme 2007 to 2013. The Department for Communities and Local Government is the managing authority for the European Regional Development Fund Programme, which is one of the funds established by the European Commission to help local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in project which will support local businesses and create jobs. For more information visit the Government's European regional development funding page .

Further information

For further information, images and interviews, please contact:

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