

Swimmers celebrating Cleveland Pools being open for swimming once again. Credit: Suzy Slemen.

The UK's oldest open-air swimming pool has reopened, following a £9.3million restoration project that brought the site back to life.

The first public swim took place on 10 September, marking Heritage Open Days with a day to celebrate, following the site's 40-year closure.

Situated in the historic city of Bath, Cleveland Pools is Britain’s oldest lido. It opened in 1815 to offer people a chance to swim outdoors after they were no longer able to use the River Avon. It closed in the 1980s and was added to Historic England’s Heritage at Risk Register due to its historic significance.

Supported with a £6.5m National Lottery grant, the project has saved this unique heritage site and it was removed from the register in 2022.

The 25-metre pool, children's splash area and pavilion have been restored and green energy is now being used to naturally treat and heat the pool, allowing year-round swimming.

Accessibility has also been improved, including the installation of sensory equipment. A pontoon to allow access via the river is due to open later in 2023.

Saved for its community, by its community

The Cleveland Pools Trust was set up in 2004 by a group of passionate volunteers. Thanks to their hard work, this historic site, which is shaped like a miniature Georgian crescent, has been completely restored and is now open for public swimming.

> It's a credit to the community that we can all enjoy swimming here again over 200 years later.
>
> *Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive of The National Lottery Heritage Fund*

In Autumn 2022, 100 lucky competition winners were the first to dive into the Pools following a ballot for tickets. For some, it was their first swim but for others, it brought back memories of childhood swimming there over 40 years ago.

People diving into Cleveland Pools in Bath. It is an outdoor swimming pool with buildings in the shape of a miniatur

People diving into Cleveland Pools at the celebration event in Autumn 2022. Credit: Suzy Slemen.

Turning the tide

Winter floods, contractual negotiations and installing the water source heat pump have meant a few extra months of waiting for the wider public swimming to open.

Paul Simons, Chair of the Cleveland Pools Trust, says: "This has been a marathon swim, often against the tide, but the sheer determination of the local community as represented by the trustees, an army of volunteers, well-wishers, along with supporters such as the Heritage Fund, National Lottery players and our dedicated small number of staff, has seen the project through."

The project has been recognised with multiple awards, including Restoration Project of the Year at the Museums + Heritage Awards 2023. The judges noted the grit and determination of everyone involved in the 20-year campaign to save the Pools.

Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive of The National Lottery Heritage Fund said: "Volunteers from Bath's community have tirelessly and passionately worked to return this beautiful and historic Georgian baths to its original glory and use. It's a credit to them that we can all enjoy swimming here again over 200 years later and with money raised by National Lottery players, we can ensure that heritage is valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future."

Fancy a swim?

For the latest news on the restoration project and to book swimming, visit Cleveland Pools Trust.

Cleveland Pools in Bath with windows lit up at night and reflections on the pool. The building is shaped like a minat

Cleveland Pools at night. Credit: Historic England Archive.

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heir former glory

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Saltdean Lido. Credit: Xavier Buendia.

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