

Current condition of Ynysangharad Park Lido

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) will use the funding, together with monies being sought from other funders to restore and reopen the Grade II listed Lido complex with modern facilities for the local community.

Built in 1927 in an arts and crafts style, at a time when several hundred lidos and open air swimming pools were constructed across the UK, the lido has a distinctive Mediterranean influence. Ynysangharad is the only listed lido to have survived in Wales and one of only 14 with architectural significance left in the whole of the UK.

The large number of lidos during the 1920s and 30s was influenced, in part, by a wider European social trend promoting the virtues of fitness and outdoor pursuits. The council hopes that the restoration will create a regional visitor attraction with important economic benefits for the town, alongside creating health, educational and learning benefits.

With its rectangular shaped pool, rounded corners and semi-circular diving area, the lido was considered to have one of the largest open air swimming pools in Wales, accommodating up to 1,000 people in its heyday.

During the post-war years the lido remained a popular attraction but in the 1980s the complex fell into decline and was closed in 1991.

Located in the popular Ynysangharad War Memorial Park in the centre of Pontypridd, which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors a year, the complex has a great historical significance for the town. Jenny James, the first woman

to swim the English Channel, trained at the lido and it was also a local haunt for the legendary Welsh singer, Tom Jones.

The £6.2million project, which hopes to attract 30,000 visitors in the first year of re-opening, will also include extensive opportunities for people to learn about and get involved in the heritage of the lido. Plans include accredited conservation skills training for young people who will work on the repair project and an exhibition capturing the history of the lido and the park with memories and photographs from local people. The aim is to provide visitors with a taste of how life would have been in the South Wales Valleys during the 1920s.

The council also hope to establish a community group as a focus for volunteer activity who will be given the opportunity to learn new skills and play a vital part in the life of the lido through guided walks, a dedicated website and basic maintenance work.

Dr. Manon Williams, Chair of the HLF Committee for Wales, said: “Ynysangharad Lido is a unique heritage asset in Wales which deserves to be saved. This project will restore the Lido to its former glory and in doing so create a fantastic visitor attraction and community hub with significant economic and social benefits. The project will also provide a fascinating insight into life in the 1920s and give volunteers the opportunity to play a part in their local heritage site. Our next Olympian hopeful could train here and make history all over again.”

Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council Cllr Anthony Christopher said: “The Heritage Lottery Fund decision to award £2.3m towards the lido restoration is a huge boost for the project, and the most substantial Heritage Lottery Fund award ever received in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The restoration and reopening of the lido will have a significant impact on enhancing and upgrading the historic Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.

“Restoring and bringing the lido back to use as a state-of-the art modern swimming facility will create a major visitor attraction in Pontypridd, in addition to creating new jobs in the town, and encouraging visitors to spend in the local area. This will further boost confidence in investors in the town and coupled with the ongoing transformation of Pontypridd thanks to Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, the potential to create a thriving destination for the 21st century is becoming a reality.

“The Lido would be a huge asset to the regeneration of Pontypridd overall and the positive news of this funding award gives us much encouragement to work closely with the Welsh European Funding Office to secure the important remainder of the funding package.”

Notes to editors

- Pontypridd expanded rapidly during the 19th century with the dramatic growth of the coal industry. Increasing recognition of the need to provide recreational facilities for local workers and the prosperity brought by industry, led to the establishment of an Edwardian-style park along the banks of the river Taff. Ynysangharad War Memorial Park opened in 1923, dedicated to the fallen of the First World War and includes a number of ornamental features, a bandstand, sunken garden, specimen trees and traditional flower beds
- In 1927, the lido was added in the west of the park with support principally from the Miners' Welfare Fund. The rectangular shaped central pool with rounded corners and a semi-circular diving pit projection was considered to be one of the largest open air swimming pools constructed in Wales. Its unique shape was designed to allow mixed bathing with two shallow ends, one for males and one for females, each sloping down to a common deep water area

- Outdoor swimming and bathing in rivers and lakes has long been a feature of life in the UK. In the late 17th/early 18th century, the health benefits associated with this pursuit gained increasing prominence leading to the establishment of a number of purpose-built swimming pools. The 1846 Baths and Wash-Houses Act also promoted 'open bathing places' in its provisions and by 1900, a number of cities had opened outdoor swimming pools
- The new outdoor lidos were deliberately classless and allowed mixed bathing, signalling a break from the constraints of the Victorian past and enabling the flourishing of a new 'municipal modernity' in the 1930s. The architecture of this was symbolic of the 'cult of sunlight' employing white surfaces, flat roofs for sunbathing and large areas of glazing. The lido at Pontypridd was constructed just before the height of 'Modernist' lido architecture in the 1930s but the 'Italianate/Mediterranean' influence is clearly discernable
- The term ‘Lido’ comes from the historic Lido, Venice; they are designed for activities around water where people can bathe, sunbathe and relax

Further information

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