Templemore Baths regeneration one step closer



Templemore Public Baths

Today’s announcement will allow Belfast City Council to fully develop its ambitious plans to restore, extend and fully reopen Templemore Baths in east Belfast for use as a leisure and fitness facility. Development funding of £380,000 was awarded to help work up firm proposals for the overall project which is likely to cost £16.8m.

Templemore Baths was the last in a series of public baths open throughout Belfast in the late 19th century. It provided washing and sanitary facilities for the families who came to live in the area, attracted by the development of Harland and Wolff shipyard and other engineering enterprises in the east of the city.

The baths are one of the few remaining links to a way of life now disappeared and of a time when inner-east Belfast was a thriving industrial community. They are held in high regard by the local community and have been the subject of campaigns to prevent their closure.

Although part of the complex remains in use today, around 50% of the building is vacant and in various stages of disrepair. Many of the building’s original features such as the twin entrances, which reflect first and second class admissions, the minor pool and the slipper baths remain largely intact although they have mostly been long abandoned.

The new project will not only restore the original features of the building but make it commercially sustainable by providing the local community with a new 25 metre pool and state-of-the-art gym. The baths historic features will be interpreted, and the social heritage connected to the site will be explored and used to tell the story of this much loved, iconic local building.

This new money has been awarded through HLF's Heritage Enterprise programme. It is designed to help when the cost of repairing an historic building is so high that redevelopment simply is not commercially viable. Grants of £100,000 to £5m bridge the financial gap, funding the vital repairs and conservation work needed to convert underused, derelict and vacant buildings like Templemore Baths, into new, usable commercial spaces that can have a positive impact on local economies.

Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: "Finding a sustainable use for Templemore Baths has been a goal for the local authority, Templemore Users Trust and people of east Belfast for many years. Now with ambitious proposals from Belfast City Council and money raised by National Lottery players, the baths are going to be transformed into a fitting leisure venue for people to use and enjoy.

"The new project will put the baths at the heart of the community once again, providing a boost to the local economy through the creation of employment and training opportunitieswhilst safeguarding this irreplaceable historic asset for the future."

Belfast City Council's investment in Templemore Baths is part of its £105m Leisure Transformation Programme for the city, which seeks to improve the health and well-being of the Belfast community by creating welcoming, quality facilities across the city with a wider regeneration impact, which is particularly relevant to the proposal for Templemore Baths.

Councillor John Hussey, Chairperson of Belfast City Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee said: "This investment has the twin benefits of restoring this iconic building to its former glory and allowing us to deliver our ambitious programme of improvements to leisure provision in Belfast."