

Our Strategy for the Restoration of Victoria Baths



Early Phases of Restoration

Manchester's Victoria Baths is widely recognised as Britain's finest historic municipal swimming pool. Opened to great acclaim in 1906, it represented Manchester City Council's vision for the highest quality of public facilities aimed at promoting health and well-being. The building is awash with Edwardian stained glass, decorative tiling and mosaic floors, and is listed grade II* because these stunning architectural features are remarkably intact.

Although closed as a public baths in 1993, Victoria Baths has been preserved thanks to the perseverance and dedication of local residents, together with the support of the general public. It was partially restored in 2007-8 thanks to its success on the BBC's Restoration Programme: Victoria Baths won the first series by a huge margin, and was allocated a £3m grant from Heritage Lottery Fund which allowed restoration to commence. English Heritage, Manchester City Council and a number of other funders have also made significant contributions to the £5m spent to date on restoring the fabric of the building (Restoration Phase 1 and Phase 1+).

The local residents who campaigned to save the building in 1993 successfully lobbied to elevate the building from grade II listed to grade II* and set up Victoria Baths Trust, a registered charity. The Trust manages Victoria Baths on behalf of Manchester City Council and has overseen all restoration work to date. It is the vision of the Trust and the Friends of Victoria Baths to fully restore the building, bringing at least one swimming pool and the Turkish Baths suite back into public use.

Victoria Baths now operates as a busy, vibrant heritage and community venue. Over 25,000 visitors a year view the building and attend events including a range of art performances and exhibitions, food and drink conventions and educational activities.

Restoration Phase 2 – Turkish Baths and Superintendent's Flat

The Trust is now poised to undertake the next major phase of restoration of Victoria Baths – Restoration Phase 2 which will total £3.5 million. Having evaluated the capital cost, operational options and fundraising feasibility, the Trust is drawing up a business plan for this exciting next step which comprises:

- ✓ Renovation of the Turkish Baths and creation of a health suite with environmentally-sustainable heating at a total cost of £2.7 million
- ✓ Conversion of the Superintendent's Flat, at a cost of £0.8 million, into residential accommodation.

The partially restored pool halls will continue to act as a visitor centre and venue for heritage, arts and community activities, events and other specialist uses such as weddings and TV filming.

In order to deliver Restoration Phase 2, the Trust seeks to acquire a lease of Victoria Baths from Manchester City Council via Community Asset Transfer, after which it will directly manage the

building as a whole. In addition the Trust is currently developing plans to enlist an operating partner for the renovation and management of the Turkish Baths and health suite.

The need to proceed with Restoration Phase 2 now can be demonstrated clearly:

- ✓ Victoria Baths is almost 110 years old – we must act now to ensure this beautiful piece of Manchester’s heritage is preserved for the enjoyment of future generations
- ✓ Our research has shown that the Turkish Baths will boost the local economy in a deprived area.

Restoration Phase 2 will produce a range of benefits.

Local People:

- ✓ The local economy will benefit from a new enterprise – the operational Turkish Baths and health suite - with at least 10 new employment opportunities
- ✓ Manchester’s visitor economy will be provided with an additional, unique attraction which will complement other local attractions especially Whitworth Art Gallery and Elizabeth Gaskell’s House. The Turkish Baths is expected to attract a significant number of out-of-town visitors, who will spend additional money in the hospitality sector of the city.
- ✓ The local area will benefit from quality residential accommodation, enhancing Ardwick as a neighbourhood of choice
- ✓ The Turkish Baths and health suite will provide health-promoting services in one of the most deprived wards in the city. Whilst the Turkish Baths is expected to attract visitors from a wide area, the Trust will also seek to ensure that local residents are able to access affordable services.

Heritage and Restoration:

- ✓ A large part of a nationally-recognised heritage building will be brought back into beneficial use to be enjoyed by the public
- ✓ Spaces in the building which have high architectural and historic significance will be returned to the use for which they were originally intended.

Delivering the Project

An existing local social enterprise, the Victoria Baths Trust will become financially sustainable into the future – partially due to the income from the residential accommodation - enabling it to take on the lease of Victoria Baths, strengthen its management role and plan further restoration phases. The Trust currently has four employees and expects to expand its staffing to seven posts as Restoration Phase 2 is progressed.

The Trust is working with Compton Fundraising who have extensive experience of capital fundraising on the scale required for this project and is now consulting all major stakeholders to seek their views, and in-principle support for Restoration Phase 2.

Future Phases of Restoration

The Trust’s vision is to complete the restoration of Victoria Baths and establish it as a vibrant international visitor attraction and health-promoting facility. Consequently, it anticipates further restoration and development phases on completion of Restoration Phase 2. These phases will include installing environmentally-sustainable heating throughout the building, renovating the Females pool roof, bringing one swimming pool and an Aeratone back into public use, developing a café and restaurant, enhancing spaces within the building for community use and opening a museum dedicated to the nation’s swimming history.