

Heritage Lottery Fund say "no"

Victoria Baths Trust has received the news from Heritage Lottery Fund that the bid which it submitted in December 2016 for funding to support the restoration of the Turkish Baths has been unsuccessful. This decision is hugely disappointing, but it is a set-back, not a conclusion, to the Trust's plans.

Feedback given on the bid has given us lots to be hopeful about. We have been told that it was a strong submission and that the project went to the board of Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) highly recommended. We will have a meeting with HLF in due course for more specific details on this.

So why was it turned down? Well, the board meeting which considered our application had £22.4m to allocate, which is clearly a lot of money. But they had £76.8m worth of bids. So the pot was more than three times oversubscribed and many good bids had to be turned down, including ours.

We are steadfastly determined that we will remain positive as we continue to plan for the future of Victoria Baths. The Trust has an experienced and committed board of Trustees in place and a strong and proven operator for the Turkish Baths, Fusion Lifestyle, who have confirmed that they will continue work with us. We also have a wonderful and dedicated staff and volunteer team working at Victoria Baths and many hundreds of committed supporters.

The HLF bid was to specifically bring back into public use the Turkish Baths to offer both an original and contemporary experience, with the rest of the space continuing to be used for arts and cultural events. We have every confidence that this is the right plan and we will now be applying the learning from HLF as we decide on the next steps.

The support of the Friends of Victoria Baths, visitors and the organisations that programme their events at Victoria Baths has never been more important and is hugely valued by all.

The events schedule that we have in place means that there is plenty for people to get involved in during the coming months and, through their participation, demonstrate their support for Victoria Baths. Events include public swims in May and a Midsummer Night's fundraising dinner in June, and our regular Open Days through the season.

Meanwhile the Trust will be moving onwards in its continued quest to see the restoration of one of the finest historical buildings in the country; Manchester's much-loved Water Palace.