


Olympic hopefuls in Edinburgh visit the Commonwealth Pool

A quartet of Edinburgh swimming stars had a sneak preview  of their future competition venue when they took a special tour of the Royal Commonwealth Pool.

The A-listed venue is currently undergoing a major £37m refurbishment by GRAHAM Construction which will see it become one of the best aquatics facilities in the UK.

The pool is projected to reopen to the public in early spring 2012.

The RCP will host the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games diving events and, next summer, the British Olympic swimming squad have elected to hold their final training camp there ahead of the London Games.

Today, four accomplished young Edinburgh swimmers with Commonwealth Games and Olympic aspirations – Craig Hamilton, Craig Benson, Craig McNally and Dan Wallace, all from Warrender Baths Club – were shown around the refurbishment project by GRAHAM Construction.

Champion distance freestyle swimmer Craig Hamilton, 19, is setting his sights on winning a place in the British Olympic Swimming squad for London 2012.

Craig, who is currently on a sports scholarship at Louisiana State University in the USA, said: “It was brilliant being able to train at the RCP’s 50m pool knowing that so many legendary swimmers had competed there in the Commonwealth Games. It’s going to be great to swim there again when it reopens as a new, improved facility.”

Sixteen-year-old Craig Benson said: “The Commonwealth Pool is

an iconic piece of sporting history in Scotland. For me, it has played host to my training for two years and it was at this pool where I won seven gold medals at the Scottish national age groups. I have also broken several records across my career here, so for me this pool has a strong personal attachment and I am looking forward to seeing the refurbishment completed.”

Councillor Deidre Brock, Culture and Leisure Convener for the City of Edinburgh, said: “The Royal Commonwealth Pool’s refurbishment is moving on apace and it’s fantastic to see key elements like the main competition and diving pools taking shape. The giant scale of this project is illustrated by such staggering statistics as the use of more than 400,000 tiles in the build. We’re more than halfway through this major renovation now and excitement is already building ahead of the RCP welcoming back the crowds in 2012, when we’ll also be the proud hosts of the British Olympic swimming squad as they make their final training preparations for the London Games.”

The £37m refurbishment will transform the RCP, providing:

- a 50m, eight-lane pool for community and specialist swimming use with a boom capable of subdividing the pool into two areas;
- a re-orientated 25m diving pool up to 5m deep with moveable floor which can be used for swimming when not in use for diving;
- a dry dive facility including trampoline and springboards to allow divers to practise out of the pool;
- a 25m pool with moveable floor to accommodate warm-up provision, swimming lessons and informal play utilising pool toys;
- new dry soft play facilities;
- a refurbished and expanded gym and fitness studios; and
- a refurbished and redesigned changing village, meeting and conference rooms.

Paul McBurney, project manager at GRAHAM Construction said: "The refurbishment of the Royal Commonwealth Pool will provide a stunning sporting resource and will play a key role in bringing world-class swimming events to Edinburgh.

"The Royal Commonwealth Pool has been a valuable facility for promoting Scottish excellence in swimming since it was first opened 40 years ago and GRAHAM Construction is immensely proud to be playing a part in returning this iconic facility to its rightful place as one of the world's most prestigious sporting venues."

Edinburgh Leisure Director of Business Development June Peebles said: "Edinburgh Leisure is delighted that the extensive refurbishment of the Royal Commonwealth Pool is progressing well. We have started work in preparation for opening and are excited at the prospect of re-opening the doors at this wonderful venue and welcoming our customers old and new."

An update report on progress with the RCP refurbishment will be considered by councillors at a meeting of the Culture and Leisure Committee on Tuesday 26 April 2011.