

Splashback! campaign dip their toes in the water

✘ The group had been given until tomorrow 7 August 2012 to put together a bid for the former Leith Waterworld premises. They required to organise funding for the lease, the refurbishment of the premises as well as the running costs going forward.

The community bid, which comprises a detailed business case and offer letter, will be handed in in person by campaign representatives to the CEC headquarters at Waverley Court tomorrow morning, just ahead of the closing date at 12 noon.

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Campaigner Johnny Gailey said:- “We’re taking our community bid to the Council, handing over the torch to them. It is only fitting that, during this exciting Olympic time, the future of such a well-loved and accessible pool is secured for the people of Leith, all of Edinburgh and beyond. We are providing a proposal, a springboard, for a new beginning for Waterworld, and we hope the Council will take a leap of faith and dive in.”

Fellow campaigner Ida Maspero said: “We believe our business case and supporting documents demonstrate that best value – in the broadest sense, not simply financial – will be achieved by giving the community a chance to re-open this unique and much-loved leisure pool.”

The business case draws heavily on the results of an extensive user survey run by Splashback between mid-May and end-July.

The survey, which saw over 800 responses, is part impact study and part market research. It reveals the damaging impact of the closure in January, with 74% of respondents saying that they are now swimming less since Leith Waterworld closed.

Maspero continued: “Waterworld’s unique features – particularly its warmer water temperature and shallow beach area – made it particularly popular with parents of young children to gain early water confidence, and for those with disabilities to enjoy the freedom of water. The survey has seen a good number of responses from people with disabilities or their carers, identified by respondents as a user group for whom Waterworld was particularly important.”

One respondent wrote: I attended Leith Waterworld almost every saturday and sunday for the last 5 years. I am a carer for a young man with Down Syndrome and we loved coming along every weekend, sometimes both days. Then I had my daughter 2 years ago and brought her every weekend too. It is very badly missed!

Chas Booth, Green councillor for Leith, said:-

“Leith Waterworld is a fantastic facility and I congratulate the Splashback campaigners for their hard work and commitment in drawing up a business plan for community ownership of the facility. We now need the council to recognise the tremendous value of Waterworld to Leith and the wider city, and commit to provide an ongoing revenue subsidy to allow the community to run it. The campaigners are not asking for a blank cheque: merely for the average subsidy given to pools throughout Scotland. That’s not too much to ask for a pool that brings joy to thousands of kids and their families.”

The council passed a motion in June instigated by the Leisure Convenor Richard Lewis to try and assist the group with the information they will need from council officers to finalise their paperwork.

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