

Council to sell Leith Waterworld

The council have decided this morning to sell Leith Waterworld to A & G who will develop the building as a soft play area.

The community group Splashback who wanted to reopen and run the pool have expressed their disappointment:-

We are infuriated and dismayed that City of Edinburgh Councillors today pulled the plug on Leith Waterworld for good. We have spent 15 months campaigning to save the pool, and four months working intensively with Council officers and elected members to develop the business plan for a revived pool. Yet they have abandoned their commitment to work with us and today put a price on public trust – sold for £1 million.

In the January amendment, Councillors agreed to support a feasibility stage until December 2013 and committed £125,000 towards this, with a further £225,000 over two years if the plan was successful. This decision was against officers' recommendations and seemed to indicate that Councillors had a genuine desire to work cooperatively with the city's residents. This could have been a flagship project for community engagement. In chambers on 31 January, Richard Lewis said: "We owe it to the people of Edinburgh to do everything to preserve this valuable community asset". The trust we placed in the council that day has been brutally betrayed.

Significant progress had been made through the working group: we applied for charitable status; tenders for engineering, design and consultancy services had been issued and positive contact made with potential funders, who were excited about the project. Despite this progress, our work has been

prematurely cut short. There has been no chance for a fair comparison between the commercial property deal agreed today, and our case for a community-led, revitalised Waterworld.

The bid accepted today is a poor result for Leith, for families, children, the disabled or the local community. Losing this unique and much loved fun pool is an utter tragedy for the city – such infrastructure is unlikely ever to be replaced. Soft play delivers none of the health and wellbeing benefits of swimming. What's more, the bid accepted today will bring none of the additional positive social impacts of the renewed Waterworld we proposed, such as a sense of community cohesion, volunteer and training opportunities, and precious family time together in the water.

The capital sorely lacks adequate provision of affordable, accessible family swimming. In the last 48 hours, we have pressed Councillors to address this problem by ring-fencing the £125,000 they had promised us in January. We believe this funding should be used to secure free swimming for the city's under 11s, as a minimum. Though the programme proposed in today's motion in no way compensates for the loss of Waterworld, it will hopefully help encourage more families to swim.

We are heartbroken that we have not been able to save the pool, despite our best efforts. We know this will be deeply felt by many across the city. We would like to thank everyone for your overwhelming support for the campaign. Tragically, our collective clamour has fallen on deaf ears and the will of the people has been ignored. But we urge our supporters to continue holding your elected members to account.

Thank you also to our partners and spouses, and especially our children, who have put up with all our hours of absence when we could have been swimming with them.

Johnny, Fiona, Jacqueline, Ida, Richard, Simon and Chris on

behalf of Splashback