



# *ABERGAVENNY LIDO*

## *A PROPOSAL TO MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL*

AMANDA HARWOOD    SEPT 2018

*The following paragraphs were submitted, by Abergavenny Lido Group to Monmouthshire County Council in July, so that the representatives of both parties could arrange to meet in August and discuss obtaining written permission, to apply for a number of funding streams, in order to build an outdoor swimming pool in Bailey Park, Abergavenny.*

*The meeting took place at 6pm on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> August at County Hall, as a result the Abergavenny Lido group was asked to detail certain aspects to Monmouthshire County Council's area meeting, to be held on the 26<sup>th</sup> September. The additional information at the end of this document provides more detail to that discussed at our first meeting. We hope to provide further clarification, if it's required at the area meeting.*

### **ABOUT ABERGAVENNY LIDO GROUP**

The Abergavenny Lido Group is a small group\*, formed roughly a year ago, as a response to social media interest on Abergavenny Voice. There were many memories and discussions being shared and there was a positive consensus, that an outdoor swimming pool should be brought back to Bailey Park.

**Our aim is to bring back an outdoor swimming facility to Bailey Park, that is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and can be differentiated from other facilities locally, across Wales and neighbouring English counties.**

Currently there is a resurgence in outdoor swimming, both wild and in controlled environments. The weather this year has been fantastic and as a result outdoor pools across the UK have been unable to cope with demand. There are so few outdoor pools, to cater for so many, that most facilities are full to capacity and are operating on a one-in, one-out basis at peak times. People all over the UK are standing in long, hot queues anticipating a cooler swim or bathe. Throughout the UK there are campaigns to reinstate lost and disused lidos. Wales falls very short, with only Lido-Ponty returning to use, a couple of years ago.

Lido-Ponty is a fabulous facility, but it is not local to our part of the country, (it is roughly a 70 mile round trip, via Heads of the Valleys) and it is difficult to access, as there are limited spaces for swim sessions and most have to be booked on-line. The nearest outdoor pool is in England, this is Bathurst Pool in Lydney, Gloucestershire and is roughly a 60 mile round trip from Abergavenny, it is another popular facility, and for the first time in the last 25 years, it has been operating a congestion policy this summer, similar to the one described above.

Whether or not we believe the climate is changing and warmer summers are set to prevail, in recent years there has been an increasing demand for people to swim, bathe and de-stress in outdoor facilities all over the UK; Lido – Ponty and 'Wild' swimming being good examples of the increasing popularity of outdoor swimming. A new Abergavenny facility would help to de-congest other facilities and tap into this increasing potential revenue stream. This would attract elite athletes, competitions and events, add further attractions for tourists, local people and the wider community and those with interests in other things such as the Abergavenny food and cycling festivals.

The Abergavenny Lido Group envisages a new facility, open daily, throughout the year, providing different types of swimming and water based activities, which could change seasonally. The facility would be multi-functional, able to accommodate and host other activities as well. With a proposed 50m pool and learner pool, it would attract and host competitions and events. There have been a number of requests for us to consider 'cold water' swimming and possibly hosting The World Ice Water Championships in the future. Currently Ice Water swimmers from Wales have to train in England, at Portishead near Bristol, or some of the London pools in the winter months.

The Abergavenny Lido Group has run a petition, to determine the opinion, about whether there should be an outdoor facility. The petition so far, has collected several thousand signatures online and face-to-face.

There is clearly a demand for such a facility.

In response to the petition and as part of its remit, Abergavenny Lido Group has produced a collective Vision and has asked for ideas from friends and followers on social media to help with the task. The Lido Group has been working on a business plan and has had some support from architect Alun Hughes of the City Architecture Office, in London. He has realised some ideas as sketches and designs and has also produced an overlay, which shows the old outdoor pool footprint in relation to our initial ideas for a new facility. Alun has also provided us with advice on funding streams. *More recently Alun has collated a series of quotes from experts, for work we will need, for an in-depth feasibility study<sup>1</sup>. Several experts have direct experience of working with the successful Lido – Ponty campaign and we are hoping to obtain information from some of the London Lidos, such as Parliament Hill, Tooting Bec, London Fields and Brockwell, because they operate throughout the whole year.*

As a group, we have started interviewing and recording people's memories and hope to be able to reproduce some interesting pool photographs when people come forward with their family and friends snapshots, to help a wider audience appreciate what has been lost. Photographic portraits are being taken of the people interviewed, as we want to create an oral and visual archive and exhibit the material as an exhibition locally. We also hope that this material might prove to be useful at the funding stage, because it will help to keep the campaign and the memory of the old pool alive as well.

**At this early stage the Abergavenny Lido Group want to apply for funding, but it requires permission from the landowner, in this case Monmouthshire County Council. The Abergavenny Lido Group is approaching Monmouthshire County Council to obtain this permission. This will allow us to apply for funding, such as 'Bags of Help' (Tesco), 'People and Places' (National Lottery 1<sup>st</sup> Stage and Heritage Lottery). As a group we realise this campaign is going to be long and hard and we also realise that the council is financially constrained.**

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1 Available on request

## **WE ARE NOT ASKING THE COUNCIL TO FUND OR TO RUN A NEW OUTDOOR POOL IN BAILEY PARK.**

**We would like the Council to give us written permission to continue raising funds for our campaign and to help us in any way it can, so that once everything is defined, assessed and ready to go, the Monmouthshire County council will support the group, if only in name, so that we can bring back safe outdoor swimming to Monmouthshire.**

### ***\*Abergavenny Lido Group Members:***

*Teslin Davies (Chairman)*

*Amanda Harwood (Vice Chairman – Acting Chairman 2018-2019)*

*Elaine Hunt (Treasurer)*

*Ray Tyler (Secretary & Librarian/ Archivist)*

*Niccie Tyler (Funding)*

*Craig Titchener (Publicity)*

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### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

*The Abergavenny Lido Group's campaign is in its infancy and it's aware that the intended outcome could take a long time to realise. To help with the Abergavenny Lido Group's feasibility study, the architect, Alun Hughes of City Architecture Office in London has compiled a series of quotes from experts. As a group we are unable to progress forward without any funding. Recently several members of our group raised £250 packing shopping bags in Tesco. We need to generate much larger sums of money to fund this campaign. We hope to apply for First Stage Funding with the National Lottery, to produce expert led feasibility studies. **To facilitate these applications we need to obtain written permission from Monmouthshire County Council, as site owners, to enable us to progress. To reiterate:***

## **WE ARE NOT ASKING THE COUNCIL TO RUN OR PAY FOR A NEW OUTDOOR SWIMMING POOL FACILITY.**

*At this early stage of the campaign, our proposals are not fully formed. Until we have paid for feasibility studies and obtained all the necessary reports, we are not in a position to make final decisions and proceed in turning our Vision into reality.*

*As a group we have started to look at the way similar facilities operate around the UK. We have ideas about what we would like to include in a new outdoor pool facility. We have consulted with members of the public, to see what sorts of things they would like at this stage. We want to consider all of our options and want to bring back a facility that will provide alternative and complementary choices to those that already exist in the area. There is no point working towards such an undertaking, if we only end up with a pool that is the same size as the indoor pool and that operates for a few months seasonally. These facilities already exist in or near to Abergavenny, around Monmouthshire and across Wales. We want to build an outdoor swimming facility that will be unique to the area, well used, and will enhance people's experiences of swimming, especially during the summer months.*

*As a group, we believe that rebuilding an outdoor pool facility in Bailey Park would enhance the area and would not act in direct conflict with the indoor facility attached to King Henry VIII School. Indoor and outdoor facilities could have a symbiotic relationship. For instance the existence of an outdoor pool, may increase the capacity for indoor swimming lessons, especially during the winter months. We have evidence of this working well between local indoor and outdoor pool facilities such as those at Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire.*

*An outdoor swimming facility would open up opportunities for working in partnership with other community interests in Bailey park. A viable quality restaurant/café could operate throughout the day and through the seasons. (Having looked at the business models for Clifton Lido and Thames Lido, they both have successful restaurants attached to their outdoor pools.) Whether this facility would be run by the Lido or by others would be determined nearer the time. A facility such as this, could increase footfall to the park, which in turn could encourage other groups to use the park facility regularly. A facility such as the one we are proposing could reduce the problems of vandalism, since the park would be better used throughout the day and the evening. We would introduce CCTV to the facility and the site would be maintained, with lighting, landscaping and access for all.*

*On completion of the project, we would bring a mixture of volunteers and employees (such as lifeguards and a site Manager) on board to run the facility. There would be a good opportunity for pupils from the local secondary schools to obtain work experience and training for a future in the leisure industry.*

*We are extremely mindful of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and believe that building and running Abergavenny Lido, would provide a positive framework for those that need care and support. Outdoor swimming is a very different experience to swimming indoors. Swimming amongst the elements, having the time to cloud gaze and socialising in an outdoor space are just some of the things that can promote well being. Swimming is good exercise for everyone and outdoor swimming in the sun and during the summer months, can provide a much cheaper alternative to going away on holiday. The outdoor pool is a great leveller, communal and classless to all that participate. Firm friends and memories are made in these places, at very little cost to the participants.*

*More generally, Abergavenny Lido would provide people with access to outdoor swimming, where they could help themselves to keep fit, healthy and happy and in turn this would impact positively on the overstretched NHS, reducing cases of physical and mental illness.*

*Although our task is huge, and we have no disused footprint to work to, we have the advantages associated with a blank canvas – only restricted by the boundaries of the old site, within the grounds of Bailey Park.*

*We would like to bring back a new, modern 50m pool and learner pool to the site, with considerations to the environment, and to everyone in the community. We have spoken to Dan Biddle, a survivor of the 07/07 bombings in London and he has offered his expertise in terms of access issues for individuals with disabilities.*

*We will consider uni-sex changing facilities in our final plans. While this type of facility is less expensive to build, maintain and caters to those that are trans-gender, there is evidence that women and girls are at greater risk of sexual assault, harassment and voyeurism<sup>2</sup>. We would like to consider the old fashioned changing boxes around the perimeter of the pool, as part of our final design. Although they represent the traditional 30s style Lido facilities, they offer the neutrality necessary to cater for modern gender issues and they are also on view to pool operators and this would minimise the risks outlined above. Poolside lockers would store clothing and valuables, so that changing cubicles could be reused repeatedly throughout an operational day.*

*We hope to make contact with Sports Wales and Swim Wales, so that we can understand the needs of the elite athlete and how any possible funding streams could be accessed. Designing and building Abergavenny Lido with this in mind, will make the project more viable.*

*In our planning we need to consider the economic and social returns on our investment. If trends remain, we are hopeful that Abergavenny Lido would become a valuable asset to the town, its hinterland, Monmouthshire and Wales.*

**Our next stage is the feasibility study, which will be expensive to conduct. It would be a total waste of time, if we go into this next phase with our eyes shut, not knowing that there are likely to be immeasurable obstacles or issues which prevent a pool actually being built, in spite of a positive feasibility study.**

**Could Monmouthshire County Council also explore whether there are likely to be any 'blockers' to a new pool being built? Are there any Bye Laws, Rights of Way, Preservation Orders, Conditions of Land Use that were in force at the time, when the old pool existed or that have come in to force since it was demolished? How do you know about any issues or obstacles and would you be able to keep us informed, before we embark on spending money?**

## **NEXT STEPS**

**Abergavenny Lido group:** write a short document, highlighting the differentiators for a new outdoor pool facility, offering, not just an alternative, but a preferred facility as a valued asset to Abergavenny, Monmouthshire and Wales.

**Monmouthshire County Council:** Provide written permission, as landowner, to Abergavenny Lido Group, to continue to seek funding for the return of the outdoor pool facility in Bailey Park, Abergavenny.

Inform Abergavenny Lido Group in writing about any likely 'blockers' that would prevent the Lido from being built.

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2 'Unisex Changing Rooms Put Women in Danger', Andrew Gilligan – The Sunday Times, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2018.