

CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL - A RESPONSE

THE COUNCIL SAY

The Victorian Health Suite is an important part of Carlisle's heritage, and we continue to explore the best ways to manage the facility after The Pools relocate to The Sands Centre.

WE SAY

The Friends have said that they would like to explore a community asset transfer of the Baths, and pursue funding to develop it as a Centre for Health & Wellbeing.

This sounds like a sensible medium/long-term solution to managing the facility. But this enquiry is not about that. What we are asking is what the Council is doing to ensure the Turkish Baths remain open between the relocation of The Pools and the demolition of the 1970s James Street Pool.

THE COUNCIL SAY

It is important for the City Council and wider Borderlands team to fully understand the capital project requirements and costs of the Station Gateway project before embarking on any options for refurbishment on the Victorian Health Suite. The Carlisle Station Gateway and Citadels project will regenerate the area around Carlisle Station and the Victorian Health Suite forms an integral part of the scheme.

WE SAY

Wrong. The Victorian and Turkish Baths have never formed any part of the Station Gateway Project Scheme. The County Council who lead the Gateway Scheme, have made 100% clear that the City Council is responsible for the continued operation of the Baths. The capital project requirements for the Gateway Project have no bearing on whether the City Council keeps the Turkish Baths open between the relocation of The Pools and the demolition of the 1970s James Street Pool.

THE COUNCIL SAY

It would not be in the public interest to commit time and resources to finding an operator for the site before the impact of the Station Gateway project are clear and without the clarity on the future capital costs, type of facilities required and feasibility of the service.

WE SAY

We are the Public and given the number of bookings for the Turkish Baths now exceed 500 a month, that sounds like a lot of Public Interest.

Regarding The Gateway Project - see above - it has no bearing on the operation of the Baths between the relocation of The Pools and the demolition of the 1970s Pool.

There are no capital costs for this interim period.

The Turkish Baths are the facilities, you already know what it costs to run them and the Leader of the City Council has said money (for the interim operation) is not the deciding factor. Please stop stalling. Time is running out.

THE COUNCIL SAY

The feasibility report on the Victorian Health Suite was discussed at our Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on Thursday 17 February. The City Council are considering options for the site.

WE SAY

We know it was discussed then, The Friends Group presented their Vision and the Panel agreed that the Council should pause further work on its feasibility study until The Friends complete their Architectural Heritage Fund funded study later this year. Your study took 15 months, the Friends asked for half that time.

Given the Council Leader agreed to the pause at the Scrutiny Panel, what exactly do you mean by 'considering options for the site'?

If it means discussing a community asset transfer with The Friends then great. But if you're back to options to repurpose the baths as a multi event/conference space and bistro - then no. The Council Leader agreed to pause further consideration, are you ignoring his decision?

THE COUNCIL SAY

These options will also be in sync with the Station Gateway development and take account of the Local Government Reorganisation programme, including budget requirements.

WE SAY

Consideration of options should be in sync with the decision agreed to by the Leader of the Council at the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee (see above). But in any event we are only focused on the interim operation of the Baths, synchronisation with the Gateway Project relates to the medium/long term operation of the Baths.

Arrangements for the interim operation, including budget, sit with the City Council. The budget requirement for this interim period was described by the Council Leader as de-minimus and we understand the estimated cost of operation falls below the threshold which would require it to be signed off by the Shadow Cumberland Authority.

THE COUNCIL SAY

As we receive more information on final Station Gateway design, the feasibility study and the completion of The Sands Redevelopment then a decision can be taken on the options available. Any findings will be made available as appropriate.

WE SAY

You already have all the information on the feasibility study and it was agreed to pause any further work on it (see above) and the Station Gateway design has no bearing on the City's Council decision to operate the Baths between the relocation of The Pools and the demolition of the 1970s Pool.

Furthermore, councillors agreed last July that any decision on the future of the Baths would be "subject to a sustainable business plan" and the Council's feasibility study does not provide a business plan; and councillors have never voted to close the Turkish Baths. When demolition occurs the Turkish Baths will have to close for a period of time. Until then, we expect the Council to keep the Turkish Baths open.

THE COUNCIL SAY

The Council must consider time and resources when responding to queries of this nature. We have provided as much information as possible at this time. Queries that you have highlighted as unanswered will be approached when we are able to do so, as detailed above. Any future queries should be directed to complaints@carlisle.gov.uk.

WE SAY

This is not a complaint, it's a legitimate enquiry about the operation of a City Council facility to an executive councillor from Carlisle residents.

Carlisle City Council has had almost five years to decide how the Turkish Baths will operate after the relocation of The Pools.

But we are not even asking you to decide how it will operate in the long-term, we are simply asking you to decide how the Turkish Baths will remain open between the relocation of The Pools and the demolition of the 1970s Pool. A decision that is solely and only yours to take.