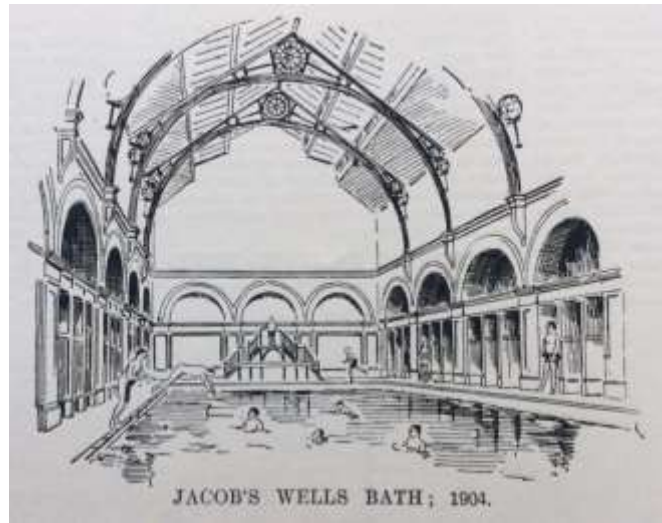


Future of Jacobs Wells Baths

First Stage Feasibility Study



Vivid Regeneration LLP January 2017 Final



1 Executive Summary

1. Jacobs Wells Baths is a Grade II listed building built in 1889. It is a building of significant architectural and heritage merit situated in a conservation area in Clifton ward adjacent to Hotwells and Harbourside ward and within a 10 minute walk of the city centre.
2. Bristol City Council own the freehold of Jacobs Wells Baths. The previous tenants, Bristol Community Dance Centre Ltd (BCDC), delivered a 30 year programme of Community Dance from the building. BCC did not renew the lease with BCDC which ended in 2015. The building is currently on a short term licence to occupy with Artspace Lifespace(ASLS) an organisation specialising in mean time use of at risk buildings. The ASLS licence ends in Feb 2017.
3. This report was commissioned by the Central, Clifton and Harbourside Neighbourhood Partnership to inform the long term future of the building. Vivid's work was delivered over a 4 month period from September 2016. The work involved: a programme of consultation events, research into the current building condition, analysis of maintenance and running costs, exploration of redevelopment options, funding research, liaison with a broad range of stakeholders, and the writing of this report. The local community, through the Jacobs Wells Community Hub group, were actively engaged and led on some of the work. ASLS also played an important role, testing uses for the building and helping to gather information regarding the opportunities and constraints associated with the building in its current condition.
4. The building has two floors. The sloping site means that there are stairs at various points in the building and disabled access is very limited. There is one vast main studio space that spans the full height of the building with a rosewood sprung dance floor. There is a second smaller studio within the South Wing adjacent to a derelict and disused two storey ex Boiler room with the original overhead tanks still in place. The North Wing houses the toilets, changing room and what was a café and box office. Upstairs there is a small office space. There is limited outdoor space and the chimney.
5. The building requires significant investment and in particular requires work to the roofs, overhead tanks, stone work and interiors. Water is entering the building. In the short term some work is required to enable the building to continue to be operated by ASLS. BCC have committed to address some of these urgent works (asbestos report, electrical safety checks, water) and this work needs to go ahead as a matter of urgency.
6. In 2015 BCDC developed detailed proposals for the redevelopment of the South Wing. This proposal would have significantly increased the income potential of the building. There are other potential options for the redevelopment of the building that would create additional lettable space.
7. There is strong evidence of demand in the city for dance space, performance space and rehearsal space. There is also a lack of community facilities locally and a growing demand from the local community for space for local activities. In other parts of the city, successful arts venues have been developed within similar buildings demonstrating both demand and viability (see case studies and in particular the example of Trinity Community Arts).
8. There is strong evidence linking the benefits of dance and arts to health and wellbeing. A new purpose built dance facility would of course be a great option, but given the lack of

sites,, value of land for housing, and lack of strategy for dance in the city it is recommended that Jacobs Wells Baths continue to be prioritised as a centre for dance. Though there are considerable constraints associated with the building, it has much in its favour, not least the main studio and a thirty year history of delivering dance. The building will be more financially viable if open to a range of users and thus other performing arts, rehearsal space and community use should also form part of the vision.

9. BCDC struggled to generate sufficient surplus from its activities to invest adequately in the maintenance of the building. However, this report includes a number of redevelopment options to increase the lettable space and thus the viability of the building. The consultation process identified a number of other potential income generating options for the building.
10. The community consultation drop ins engaged with 380 people. The drop ins were successful at reaching a broad range of stakeholders. There was a good response to the on-line and paper based survey with 230 completed surveys. There is a clear “ask” from stakeholders for the building to be retained and developed as a dance, arts and community facility. Redevelopment for residential or demolition is not supported.
11. ASLS have worked hard to make use of the space in the short term and early on successfully attracted bookings. However, the current building condition and *current weather conditions* is off putting for many groups and ASLS have found it difficult to find groups prepared to pay for the space. Since January demand has begun increasing again with booking requests for throughout 2017.
12. The overall cost of the required capital works is not known. The building requires a master plan and a phased approach to renovation. Urgent works are required followed by Phase 1 works to include temporary repairs to the roof to stop further water ingress. Phase 2 should fully repair or replace the roofs, improve the interior of the building and address some of the access issues. Phase 3 could focus on either the North Wing or the South Wing for redevelopment. Further phases would need to follow.
13. BCC will need to cover the costs associated with Urgent works and later Phase 1. Phase 2 and Phase 3 could be funded through grant funding, trust funding, crowdfunding and loan finance. Details of funding opportunities are detailed in this report. An important potential funder is the Heritage Lottery Fund.
14. Further feasibility work is required and in particular the Building Condition survey needs updating. A bid to the Architectural Heritage fund has been made and if successful could cover this cost.
15. Significant work has been carried out to raise awareness within the local community and amongst city wide stakeholders interested in the heritage and potential of the building. This work could be built upon through a revenue bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a community learning and community engagement project to both keep the momentum and interest alive and to develop a long term activity plan alongside a potential bid to Heritage Lottery Fund. Myers-Insole Local Learning could help with this work. See <http://www.locallearning.org.uk/>.
16. In the short term BCC should carry out urgent emergency works to enable ASLS to extend their lease until September. ASLS require grant funding to cover their operating costs and BCC (Culture/Arts dept.) could contribute to this. ASLS have made an application to Quartet

to help with some of these costs. If these recommendations are taken forward quickly this would safeguard the building in the short term. This is preferable to boarding up the building which would put it at risk of unlawful occupation and risk further degradation of the building fabric.

17. A vision for the building has emerged from this first stage feasibility as:

A vibrant, accessible and inclusive nationally and locally acclaimed hub for dance, performing arts, wellbeing and community development.

18. In the long term BCC must decide whether to lease or dispose of the building. There are significant risks associated with selling the building as have been played out through the sale of other historic baths buildings in the city (e.g. Gloucester Rd Baths, Speedwell Baths). It is the recommendation of this report that BCC seek a partner willing to take a long lease of the building. The identified partner needs to recognise that they are taking on a renovation project. A 35 year lease (or up to 99 years) will enable an organisation to apply for grants and raise finance, and a 5 year break clause will ensure that BCC can take the building back if the organisation has been unable to bring forward investment. Funding implications of the 5 year break clause still need to be understood and may vary between funders.
19. It is the recommendation of this report that BCC move forward therefore with a Community Asset Transfer of the Jacobs Wells Baths building. There is interest in the building from existing cultural organisations which can then be formally explored through the Expression of Interest stage of the Community Asset Transfer process. The process needs to be carried out over a reasonable period of time to enable organisations to respond. BCC will need to provide a “dowry” in the region of £250,000 contribution to roof repairs. If this investment enables a credible third sector organisation to take on the building and secure match funding to renovate and redevelop the building then an important heritage asset will have been saved and the council will have invested its money wisely. If the CAT fails and the council are forced to sell the building then this investment will have prevented further deterioration of the building.
20. Key stakeholders should come together to form “The Friends of the Jacobs Wells Baths” and meet regularly to work with the council to progress the CAT. If there is no credible interest in the CAT transfer from an existing organisation this group could consider setting up as a Trust to lease, repair and manage the building. If there is no enthusiasm or will to do this then the council will have no alternative other than to sell the building.
21. This report includes some inspiring case studies of other “at risk” buildings that have been successfully renovated and which now provide high quality facilities, community and art activities. Jacobs Wells Baths could be another such success story but BCC must act quickly. The building may not survive another winter.
22. Next steps in summary: (1) BCC to carry out emergency works (asbestos, conditions survey, electrical testing, water testing) (2) ASLS to secure funding for running costs to enable extension of licence (3) Friends of Jacobs Wells Baths to be established (3) Asset transfer process underway.