

POOL: meadow site could see open-air swimming all year round

Let's take the plunge

Continued from front page

Page. He said: "What attracts me to the Clifton Lido proposal is its an organisation which has already done this."

"They bring resources and commercial viability which is something so central to making this a success."

Cllr Page said the council also needed to take into account the comments of English Heritage which said the Clifton Lido bid was the most likely to generate the necessary funding to restore the building and to give it a sustainable future.

Cllr Page said: "I think for the first time in decades, we have the opportunity to move forward with the real hope of



WATER WINNER: The firm behind the award-winning Bristol Lido project is preferred bidder for the King's Meadow Baths project

the baths being restored and used."

Bob O'Neill, of the King's Meadow Campaign, made a last ditch call for the council to work with the group to bid for Lottery

funding to keep the baths in public ownership.

He was backed by Tory councillor Richard Willis who said: "I think the one thing the council hasn't done is give King's Meadow Campaign the support it's asking for in terms of backing going to the Lottery Commission."

Tory group leader Cllr Tim Harris said: "I do have concerns with regard to accessibility."

"I think the price is so high a lot of people will be prohibited from using it."

However, Cllr Jan Gavin said: "I don't believe we should be rejecting the opportunity to involve a substantial and

successful bidder to restore this building and bringing it back to us against the lottery of whether we would win a Lottery bid."

Cllr Lovelock insisted the committee decision did not mean it was a done deal and pricing would be one of the areas to be negotiated with Clifton.

Councillors approved Clifton Lido as the preferred bidder subject to pre-application discussions with local businessman Mohammed Ali's bid as second choice should negotiations fail.

He proposes the renovation and extension of the building to include a new function hall.

Lido firm set to dive in at meadow baths

DAVID MILLWARD
@davidinreading

A COMPANY behind an award-winning lido in Bristol is front runner to restore the dilapidated King's Meadow Baths.

Councillors selected Clifton Lido Ltd as preferred bidder for the project to bring the Grade II-listed old Edwardian pool back into use.

The business plans to operate an open air pool all year round on the site along with a spa, restaurant and bar.

However, critics are concerned the price of admission could be prohibitive and say Reading Borough Council should instead bid for Lottery funding in partnership with the King's Meadow Campaign.

Members of the council's policy committee saw presentations from four of the five organisations bidding to take on the project at a meeting on Monday.

Mark Thwaites, general manager of Bristol Lido, told the committee how the organisation had restored the Grade II* listed facility which boasts 350 swimmers per day throughout the year.

He said King's Meadow Baths would be run on a similar business model with the heated pool open from 7am to 10pm and a cafe bar serving breakfasts from 7.30am and a restaurant serving meals from noon to 11pm.

The adjoining transport container would be demolished and a new sports changing room and toilet building would be provided.

Council leader Councillor Jo Lovelock proposed Clifton Lido as the preferred bidder, seconded by deputy leader Cllr Tony

Please turn to page 7 column 1

2 (cont)