

Case Study – Nechells Baths

Since its official opening in 1910, Nechells Baths had been a very important focus for its local community. It provided a large swimming pool, spectators' gallery and suites of private baths for men and women. It also became home to the Nechells Institute; each winter, with a boarded floor over the swimming pool area, local residents enjoyed billiards, bagatelle and chess. In later years, the building hosted a winter Assembly Hall, featuring highly popular orchestras and social events.



Caption: Nechells Baths, a solid Victorian building completed in 1902, had a vibrant community history, but fell into disuse in 1995.

Sadly, despite such a rich history as a focal point for local community activity, plans to close the baths were announced in 1995. There followed a period of vandalism and break-ins, and the building suffered from a sad period of deterioration.

Now, working in classic public/private partnership with the city of Birmingham, we have received approval to bring the existing baths back into reuse for the benefit of the Nechells community, marking it as the first project undertaken by the Birmingham Foundation that addresses the physical fabric of the city.

External funds have already been earmarked for this ambitious project, and additional funding will be finalised to secure the total amount.

Paramount to the project will be the involvement of the local community in contributing to the development. Consultation will be taking place throughout the regeneration of the Baths to ensure the facilities offered dovetail with the needs of the community.

Current facilities under consideration:

- ⊙ Heritage craft workshops
- ⊙ Offices
- ⊙ Day care training centre
- ⊙ Employment resource centre
- ⊙ Coffee shop
- ⊙ Crèche
- ⊙ Oral history centre
- ⊙ Cyber café / coffee shop

An innovative feature of the proposal will be the opportunity for a number of people to receive training in construction and conservation craft skills during the course of the project. This training will be ongoing and will give people the opportunity to redevelop traditional working skills.