

New Baths needed as pools are 'disgusting'

by **Joe Gammie**

■ jgammie@berksmedia.co.uk

CAMPAIGNERS are calling on the borough council to clean up its "disgusting" swimming pools or speed up renovations to the historic Kings Meadow Baths.

Clare Newman from Caversham Park began an online petition to improve the facilities at Reading's six swimming pools after hearing families were boycotting local baths and travelling as far afield as Windsor and Maidenhead to go for a dip.

She said: "It is silly no one wants to go swimming in their own borough pools. The main thing people are complaining about is how dirty the pools are."

The petition has 733 signatures so far, but Mrs Newman is demanding the borough council either improves its pools or stops dragging its heels over repairs to the 110-year-old historic Edwardian baths in Napier Road.

Last month *The Chronicle* revealed that Bristol-based Clifton Lido - which has submitted £3m plans to regenerate the grade II listed building - was facing a bill of £10,000 a month because it has not been given permission to make

repairs to the dilapidated building.

Mrs Newman said: "The Kings Meadow Baths will be fantastic but I believe the council is dragging its heels over it. I would love to go swimming somewhere nice and clean but I don't want to go to the council-run pools because they are so disgusting."

But council spokesman Oscar Mortali told *The Chronicle* that Clifton Lido has submitted an application for listed building consent which will allow it to begin repairs if it is approved by planning bosses.

He said the decision will be made within a month and stressed that any improvements to the borough's swimming pools have to be balanced against the need to save £40m in the next three years. He added: "We are actively looking at how we might improve buildings and facilities."

However, Clifton Lido owner Arne Ringner said if swimmers are voting with their feet not to use council pools it is a sad indictment on the current culture. He added: "I don't see Kings Meadows as anything other than an alternative where hopefully we will set some standards that others will aspire to."

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