

Covid-19 and 2020 Lido Season Update

Many of you will have seen today's announcement from the Government sanctioning the re-opening of swimming pools – ***"if it is safe to do so"***. Despite this, however, and further to our post on 19th June, I'm sorry to re-state the case that the position with regard to Peterborough's lido remains the same ... the lido is very unlikely to open for the 2020 season.

There has been lots of speculating and deliberating about this issue, both publicly and behind the scenes ... and I therefore want to update our supporters with all that has occurred.

The Friends of the Lido Committee has considered this matter very carefully, and has concluded that the interests of the Friends would best be served by directing our energies into campaigning for the long-term survival of the lido, rather than pursuing a "quick win" in 2020. Our reasons for this are as below –

- Firstly, **making our lido Covid-safe for all** – whatever the legal position - will be extremely difficult to achieve, and the qualifying condition of *"if it is safe to do so"* must be taken seriously. The threat of Coronavirus still threatens us all, with the World Health Organisation advising that the worst is still yet to come, and "second waves" occurring nationally and internationally. Although it is thought that the virus cannot survive in a chlorinated pool, the furniture within the lido – lockers, changing cubicles, toilets, showers, entry turn styles – all provide the opportunity for the disease to be transferred from person to person, and social distancing – the central pillar of disease control – will be almost impossible to enforce within the lido environment, not to mention managing queues of people outside. We have all seen what has happened at recent crowded events and venues (Bournemouth and other beaches, the London marches, Liverpool FC's championship win, etc) - and our very grave concern is that those attending the lido in a relaxed state of enjoyment may not observe the social distancing standards required to ensure the safety of all.
- Secondly, **the economic viability of the lido is crucial at this time**. Managing the social distancing concerns described above would necessitate additional staff – at additional cost, and many weeks of preparation would still be required before the lido could be opened. At this stage of the Summer, it would simply not be economically viable to open the facility for some four-five weeks.

This decision regarding re-opening of the Lido does not, of course, rest with the Friends of the Lido! During the ongoing 90-day consultation period, Vivacity remain in control of all leisure, arts and heritage venues, and Stewart Francis – Chair of Vivacity Trustees – has stated that they cannot support such an inevitable economic loss – and neither can the City Council.

The Committee therefore firmly and unanimously believes that our strategic and long-term aim should be to focus to *"develop and enhance the ... financial viability and long-term sustainability of the Lido"* in accordance with Clause 1.1 of our Constitution.

And it is our view that to incur either a huge financial loss this year and/or run the risk of visitors falling victim to the virus would prejudice the case for the long-term survival of the lido.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, the Friends' committee are working hard to ensure that our voice is heard. I am pleased to say that I was able to attend a one-to-one virtual meeting with the Peterborough City Council's Chief Executive, who has assured me that – at the appropriate time – the Friends will have a seat at the table, alongside other stakeholders in the future of Vivacity venues. And, following a period of inactivity brought about by lockdown, the Committee has now commenced a programme of zoom meetings so that we can keep you up to date with developments.

No-one would like to see the lido open more than members of the Friends Committee, who have given many hours of their time to promote, develop and preserve our beloved lido! We know that our position may disappoint some of our supporters, but hope that they will continue to support us as we carefully consider and work towards what we feel is best for Peterborough's Lido.