

# Bramley Baths

A community led Edwardian bathhouse in the suburbs of Leeds



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Organisation:	<b>Community owned leisure centre</b>
Location:	<b>Bramley, Leeds</b>
Award date:	<b>September, 2018</b>
Award amount:	<b>£295,000</b>
Ownership:	<b>Community limited by guarantee</b>

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### **Grant purpose**

The grant from Power to Change enabled Bramley Baths to introduce new sustainable technologies for a more efficient future. This involved, amongst other things, installing new filters, pumps, heat exchanges and an air handling unit.

### **Accountable to the local community**

Bramley Baths has been championed by local residents from the start, but their voice came to be heard eight years ago when it was threatened with closure. Supporters were determined to provide an affordable space for health and fitness.

### **A successful trading operation**

Armed with what later became a 50-year lease, the community were able to take on the running of the baths themselves. They now turn a profit with 41 staff on the books, aged 16 years and up; all paid the Living Wage.

### **Better access to services**

Bramley Baths acts as a public gym, swimming pool, steam room and is space for community events, meetings and fitness classes, providing the local community with a wealth of amenities.

Originally an old foundry opened in 1904, Bramley Baths has been at the heart of the community for over 115 years, making its place clear before the urban sprawl of Leeds appeared around it. Boasting a 25-yard pool alongside the exotic sounding Russian Steam Baths, very popular with Edwardians at the time, the pool was a place for people to swim, bathe and wash as a healthy pastime.

Bramley Baths continued as a council owned and run amenity until 2011 when it was threatened with closure. Declining revenues led to reduced opening hours creating a vicious circle that was

only heading in one direction. Faced with closure, the community came together to pool their thoughts. Armed with newly passed legislation in the form of the Community Rights Act that local MP and later minister John Battle had helped to draft, the community approached the council for an asset transfer, what would become the first in Leeds. The local authority agreed and in 2013, Bramley Baths was taken on by its community without the pool having to close for a single day. Sue Stones is the general manager of the baths with 15 years of retail experience at Harvey Nichols under her belt. The pool and gym timetables are both running at capacity with other spaces in the building being considered to host more classes.

New technologies installed in the pools resulted in improved water quality with less chlorine in the pool and lower water and energy bills. Furthermore, the upgraded system means the heating no longer needs to run at full pelt 24 hours a day ensuring less boiler break downs.

The determination of local residents, volunteers, workers and supporters of the baths has enabled an affordable space for health and fitness be provided for the community and has ensured the survival of their beautiful grade II listed building. That influence goes on; anyone can become a Friend of Bramley Baths for £1, a membership for life that means you can vote at AGMs and decide who is and is not on the board.



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