



Ffordd y Traeth | Beach Road, HARLECH. LL46 2UG t: 01766 780576 www.harlechardudwyleisure.org.uk

PRESS RELEASE – March update.

It is with regret that Harlech and Ardudwy Leisure (HAL) are having to announce that due to the current energy costs and reduction in use of the Centre, that HAL is now facing significant financial difficulties and has reached a crisis point. Energy has always been an issue for swimming pools, and this has been highlighted to the community and wider stakeholders in many meetings and other communication over the years. The Board has been carefully monitoring the energy bills along with income and expenditure and the staff team have been working hard to ensure the equipment is working to its optimum capacity, however the costs have risen where they are unsustainable.

HAL energy costs have risen from around £4,000 per month up to £12,000 per month. The £12,000 per month is with the benefit of the Government Energy Support Scheme and without this support then this figure will increase. Moving forward, energy costs may reduce in the long term with potential grant funded investment in renewable energy generation (e.g. solar panels) and more efficient plant and machinery can provide potential solutions, however the current energy costs are unsustainable as they stand. The number of people using the swimming pool over the last couple of months has reduced as the cost of living is affecting everyone, this is a trend that we are witnessing across the sector.

The Board of Directors held an emergency meeting on Tuesday 7th March 2023 to discuss the future of HAL but more specifically the costs associated with running the swimming pool and the implications to the wider Centre. The Board came to the difficult but necessary decision due to lack of finances that the swimming pool will be closed before the end of March and the café and climbing wall to remain open in the short-term. The Harlech Triathlon is due to run on the 26th March and the Board recognises how important the event is to the local economy and the event organisers (Always Aim High) and has worked hard with the staff to keep the pool open but we need to raise a minimum of £5,000 either by sponsorship or donations over the next few weeks, we are confident that this can be achieved and the event will go ahead as planned and we would like to keep the swimming pool open until the end of the Easter holidays in April. We have spoken to Gwynedd Council this week, with help from Councillor Gwynfor Owen, they have agreed to help up out with an outstanding debt to Gwynedd Council which has given us hope of remaining open until the end of March 2023 but funds still need to be raised to guarantee this. **It is more important than ever that the centre is used by the local community over the coming weeks to generate as much income as possible to try and extend the closing date of the swimming pool.** If we can remain open until the end of March, then we will be able to finish off the school term swimming lessons along with private swimming lessons.

If this funding is not raised, the Board cannot risk placing HAL in a negative financial situation. Information on sponsorship will be circulated to local businesses and anyone interested should contact the Centre Lead (Donna) using email: manager@harlechardudwyleisure.org.uk. The reality is that this sponsorship and any donations may not save the pool in the medium or long term, but it will allow for staff to be retained for a certain period of time, enabling staff to lead a discussion of what the Community Asset should be in the future. The last thing anybody wants is for the building to be closed and to become another empty building in Harlech.

Finance is not the only problem that faces HAL currently. The members of the Board of Directors are volunteers from the community who have given a substantial amount of personal time to allow for the community asset to operate, moral and energy of the volunteer Board is very low. There have been a lot of false rumours circulating recently along with correspondence and feedback to the Board questioning their professional and moral approach to running the Centre. This has been very demoralising to members of the Board, members of staff and volunteers who have worked hard and in the best interest of HAL having committed thousands of volunteer hours over the last 15 years of operation. The Board have faced a wave of local vendetta based on mis-information against HAL which has made it difficult for the Board to continue and as a result of this and other factors, on the 7th March 2023 – four out of eight Board members resigned from their positions and we have received a further resignation this morning so that leaves



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us with a total of 3 Board Members. This leaves HAL in a further precarious position because this is an insufficient number of Directors to run the centre unless a new Board is established the Centre will not be able to operate leaving the community without an Asset and existing staff without work. The remaining Board members are reviewing their positions and unless new volunteers come forward then it is very likely that the remaining Board will also resign leaving no option but to close the Centre as a whole.

The Board would like to praise the work of Donna (Centre Lead) and all the staff and volunteers that she is managing. Training new lifeguards has enabled the operation of a timetable catering for many groups, and it is very disappointing for everyone involved that this is at risk of permanent loss. HAL has been a significant employer in the area for many years.

There are two community events which are being held in March organised by the Community Councils. We would like to invite local community members along to those meetings, specifically so that new Board members can be recruited and a solution for the current problems can be found, however should you be interested in joining the Board, please don't hesitate to contact our centre lead on the aforementioned email. The meeting timetable is listed below:

- Talsarnau – 20th March 6.30pm at the Community Hall
- Harlech – 21st March 6.30pm at the Memorial Hall

The Board believe that the Cafe and Climbing wall could continue to operate for the benefit of the local and wider community as well as visitors whilst the swimming pool is closed. The support through the Community Precept whilst the swimming pool is closed will allow for a new Board to work with the staff team to find the longer-term solution for the operation of this community asset.

Positive recent news:

- HAL is a nominee for the North Wales Police and Community Trust – Your Community Your Choice 2023 Awards. Please go on-line and vote for a project to be delivered at the Centre to provide youth activities in conjunction with Ieuenctid Gwynedd Youth (IGY). <https://www.pactnorthwales.co.uk/2023/02/27/your-community-your-choice-2023-voting-now-open/>
- Magnox have sponsored the purchase of a pizza machine to enable the Café to increase its turnover to help with raising funds to support the community asset.

We have said this before but, at this point in time the collective resource of people committing time to HAL is insufficient and we need to re-emphasise that if the local community want HAL to retain an operational swimming pool, cafe & climbing wall then the local community needs to be an active part of the solution. We would again reach out to the local community for volunteers to help in any area of the centre or by joining the Board of Directors and we specifically need someone with accounting/financial expertise.

Please email: manager@harlechardudwyleisure.org.uk if you can help in any way.

To re-emphasise we need a minimum £5,000 in the next couple of weeks to allow for the swimming pool to remain open for the Harlech Triathlon event (26th March 2023), we then need to find a financial solution for the energy costs and a people solution for the Board. Please support the centre over the coming weeks either by using the swimming pool, café or climbing wall or give a small donation, a crowd funding page has been set up.

Crowd Funding page link: <https://gofund.me/74e94a41>

10th March 2023 – Board Volunteers, Harlech and Ardudwy Leisure.