

The Friends of Jesus Green Lido – Trustees’ report, February 2026

Charity detail:

Charity name: The Friends of Jesus Green Lido
Charity number: 1203117
Registered address: 13 Aylestone Road, Cambridge, CB4 1HF

Trustees:

Name	Designation	Appointed	Resigned
Nicky Blanning	Chair	18/5/2023	
Jo Lockhart	Secretary	18/5/2023	
Andrew Herbert	Treasurer	18/5/2023	
Simon Biggin		18/5/2023	
Iain Shaw		18/5/2023	
Becky Allen		18/5/2023	
Colin Campbell		18/5/2023	28/5/2024
Branwen Brockley		18/6/2024	
Mark Rogers		20/2/2025	

Constitution: CIO Foundation

Governing document: FJGL Charity Constitution dated 21/3/23*

Trustee selection: By invitation of the Trustees with reference to experience, skills and contacts suitable to further the aims of the Charity.

* In line with Charity Commission guidance

Objectives:

Charitable purpose: “The advancement of amateur sport”

To safeguard the future of the Jesus Green Lido for the benefit of the people of Cambridge and the Nation; to enable residents and visitors to Cambridge to participate safely in outdoor swimming; and to promote the many social and health benefits of outdoor swimming and related activities.

Core aims:

- to safeguard the future of Jesus Green Lido for the benefit of the people of Cambridge and the Nation;
- to encourage and enable residents and visitors to Cambridge to participate safely in outdoor swimming;
- to champion outdoor swimming and its many social and health benefits, as well as related activities.

Background

Jesus Green Lido (the Lido) is owned by Cambridge City Council (Council) and is currently operated by GLL (operating as Better) under contract as a public facility. It is open throughout the year and has more than 2000 registered users, plus thousands of ad hoc visitors from Cambridgeshire, the UK and overseas.

The Lido was built in 1923, at a time when many former servicemen faced unemployment in the aftermath of the First World War. Originally named Cambridge Swimming Pool, the Lido is unheated, it is 100 yards long and runs parallel to the River Cam. It takes its name from Jesus Green, the large public park close to Cambridge city centre, where the Lido is located.

The Friends of Jesus Green Lido (the Friends) was formed by a small number of volunteers as a community group in the 1980s to safeguard and promote the Lido, one of the longest and oldest lidos in the UK.

The purpose of the Friends was to ensure users of the Lido had a voice, particularly during a period when the future of community swimming pools was under threat. Over the past 40 years the Friends have continued to support the pool and promote its use through events and modest fund raising, supporting provision of artwork, floral displays and organising volunteers to help the operators with maintenance.

In the aftermath of the COVID pandemic and its impact on public services, the Friends committee was approached by an individual who was prepared to make a donation to help increase opening hours of the pool. The Friends facilitated the use of that donation by GLL to enable the standardisation of opening hours in the summer months, and to encourage the introduction of winter swimming and year-round opening for the first time in the winter of 2021.

The pandemic also led the Council to extend the management contract with GLL by a further three years to March 2026. This was to provide more time to consider the requirements for the Lido into the future.

The Council has recognised the need to invest in the Lido and its surrounds and is developing plans as part of its broader remit to provide leisure facilities in the greater Cambridge area. It was in recognition of this and with a concern to ensure the Friends were able to contribute in a meaningful way to the planning and implementation of any changes to the Lido that the Charity 'The Friends of Jesus Green Lido' (the Charity) was established. There have been several projects across the country to rejuvenate lidos for the benefit of the public and these have been financed, at least in part, through funds raised by charitable organisations. The purpose of the Charity is to provide the vehicle through which similar support can be offered to the Lido.

The Charity is managed by a small team of Trustees, all of whom bring specific expertise, skills or contacts. The primary focus of the Trustees is on the future of the Lido and investment plans.

Objectives:

When the Charity was established, the Trustees committed to achieve its core aims by undertaking the following actions (fundraising, awareness, inclusion, impact, campaigning):

- embark on a fundraising campaign for the benefit of the Lido and its surrounding area;
- draw upon the impact and publicity of the 2023 Centenary Celebrations to grow awareness of the Lido;
- encourage communities traditionally removed from outdoor swimming (such as disabled swimmers and schoolchildren) to access the Lido and benefit from the sport and the supportive community;
- promote the physical, social and mental health benefits of outdoor swimming to the local and wider population;
- lend its voice to national and international campaigns for cleaner waterways and increased access to outdoor swimming.

Activity to date:

Initial activity of the Trustees was to understand the landscape for investment in and development of other lidos and how similar charitable bodies had been able to influence outcomes and raise funds to support their objectives.

We made contact with members of similar charity groups and heard how they had approached their particular situation, gleaned advice on what had worked and what had not and also potential sources of funding.

The Trustees also visited a number of lidos around the UK where renovation projects had recently been completed. We were interested to understand the features that attract greater use and diversity of users.

Initial meetings were arranged with officers of the Council and local representatives of GLL to make them aware of the formation of the Charity and to offer input and advice on plans for the Lido. GLL operates under a contract that is due to expire in 2026.

The Trustees organised a survey of users of the Lido, seeking views on aspects that attract users and on areas for improvement to remove any barriers to greater participation in swimming at the Lido and its broader amenity. The feedback informed a vision document (the Vision) which has been presented to and discussed with Council officers as they continue to develop plans for the Lido. The survey was also used to identify local people with relevant skills and expertise to help enhance the capability of the Trustee team.

The Trustees continue to engage with relevant Council members so as to maintain the spotlight on preserving and enhancing the Lido for future generations., The Council has made it clear that it faces financial challenges.

One specific priority identified by users is an improvement/upgrade of the sauna facility in operation at the Lido. This is very popular with winter swimmers and has the potential to

attract non-swimmers as well. Visits to Parliament Hill Lido by Trustees reinforced the opportunity to expand user numbers by offering a good quality sauna / cold bath facility. The Trustees are in discussion with specialist operators to determine how an improved facility may be introduced to the Lido. This has been identified as a first potential fund-raising activity.

The Trustees have looked into potential sources of grant and other funding for development of the Lido. Any fund-raising activity requires a clear purpose and costed financial plan. The Trustees continue to work with Council officers towards this goal.

Finances and Accounts

The Charity has opened a bank account but to date has not engaged in any financial activity. Any expenses of the Charity have been met by Trustees from personal sources.

There are no accounts to present at the financial year end (30/4/2025). All balances are zero.

Future plans

As mentioned above, GLL's management contract expires in March this year. Currently, the Council's recreational facilities (Facilities) (which include the Lido) are out for tender. The tender records that the Council "has allocated approximately £2,270,000 for capital investment in the Facilities, much of which has already been raised by the [Council] and which will continue to be raised by through S106 contributions to the [Council]. The [Council] expects that Bidders will match the [Council's] capital expenditure allocation as part of their Initial and Final Tenders".

Final tenders are due by 24 April 2026. The estimated duration of the contract is 26 June 2026 to 25 June 2036 with a possible five-year extension to June 2041. Once the new contract has been awarded, it is the intention of the Trustees to liaise with the Council and the successful bidder on implementing the Vision. On that note, the Trustees stand ready to support the Council and the successful bidder with any necessary fund raising to ensure a full upgrade of the facilities and amenities at the Lido. To align with the re-tender, the Trustees are hosting an event on 7 May 2026 aimed at launching the Charity to the public by way of communicating our aims (as set out below), promoting the Vision and garnering support for fund raising.

With a view to bringing the Charity into public prominence, in December 2025, it was agreed that the Friends would operate as a sub-committee of the Charity thus continuing to provide support for events and other activities. As an example, on 14 March 2026, the Lido is hosting the "Cambridge Festival of Chill", a community swimming event in support of a local hospice.

Our aims have not changed; they remain as follows:

- embark on a fundraising campaign for the benefit of the Lido and its surrounding area;
- draw upon the impact and publicity of the 2023 Centenary Celebrations to grow awareness of the Lido;
- encourage communities traditionally removed from outdoor swimming (such as disabled swimmers and schoolchildren) to access the Lido and benefit from the sport and the supportive community;
- promote the physical, social and mental health benefits of outdoor swimming to the local and wider population;
- lend its voice to national and international campaigns for cleaner waterways and increased access to outdoor swimming.