



Media Release

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***photo opportunity – see below**

FORMER CHAIRMAN OF ROYAL BATHS WORKING PARTY TO OFFICIALLY RE-OPEN RESTORED TURKISH BATHS

THE £10m re-development of Harrogate’s premier listed building – the Royal Baths Assembly Rooms – was overseen by a working party, chaired by Councillor Margaret-Ann de Courcey-Bayley. So it is seen as a fitting tribute, during her year of office as Civic Head of the Borough, that Councillor de Courcey-Bayley should be formally invited as Mayor of the Borough of Harrogate to officially re-open the newly restored Turkish Baths and Health Spa on *Wednesday, 3 November.

The glitteringly restored Turkish Baths, which have just undergone a £1m transformation, is seen as the final piece in the re-development of this 100-year-old building.

It was back in 1995 when the council, faced with mounting costs to keep protecting an under-used but costly to run Victorian listed building, first marketed the Royal Baths site. Few genuine expressions of interest were received because the standards required to restore and put to use a Grade II listed building added steeply to the costs.

However, the council put its faith in finding a private development partner (Scottish Life) for the whole complex and in the generous grant it eventually received from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the restoration of the Turkish Baths.

Councillor Margaret-Ann de Courcey-Bayley, who will be joined at the opening event by Sophie Forgan, Committee Member for the Heritage Lottery Fund in the Yorkshire and Humber region as well as representatives from Scottish Life and contractors who worked on the restoration, said: “I can’t quite believe that it is nearly ten years since we first began our quest to find a way of financing the redevelopment of this lovely old building. Many local authorities are faced with similar problems as the grand old buildings of the 19th century fail to find favour with modern facilities for the 21st century user.

“We had a tumultuous time in trying to identify a scheme which would deliver a viable commercial interest for a potential developer and, at the same time, keep the building in public use and protect the public purse. Although we would have loved the whole building to have been returned to its former use as the seat of Harrogate’s spa industry, this just wasn’t achievable. But we were firm in our belief that the Turkish Baths should remain in the council’s control so that we could ensure they remained available for public use.

“How right we were. Harrogate’s Turkish Baths have been restored to their fabulous Victorian beginnings and I am happy to say that they are once again providing both visitors and locals with an experience second to none. We are extremely grateful to Scottish Life. Not only did they pay a development premium for the whole building they also through agreed works – which counted as match funding for grant aid – helped us with a contribution towards our costs for the Turkish Baths refurbishment. But the Turkish Baths project very much depended on a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. We really couldn’t have done it without HLF’s generous grant of some £450,000.”

***PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: 10.30 am Wednesday, 3 November 2004 when the Mayor of the Borough of Harrogate (Councillor Margaret-Ann de Courcey-Bayley) will unveil a plaque to commemorate this official re-opening.**

NOTE TO EDITORS: The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and beauty spots or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our

nation's heritage for everyone to enjoy. This is the 10th birthday year of the National Lottery and over the last decade we have supported more than 15,000 projects, allocating over £3 billion across the UK.

This year The National Lottery celebrates its 10th Birthday, which will be marked with the first ever National Lottery Day on 6th November. Lottery funded projects across the UK, will be holding special activities and events in the lead up to and on 6th November, to thank the public for playing and supporting the Lottery.

For more detailed information on events and activities taking place to celebrate the 10th Birthday, please visit www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk