



The Reef

Coastal Exploration Centre

The coastal community of The Knap and the wider Barry area are teaming up to breathe new life into the dilapidated 'Old Lifeguards Building' left in ruin on the shores of Watch House Bay at Cold Knap Point.

The historic building was originally a cloakroom for the Knap Pool Lido back in the 1920s. For the past sixty years, the dedicated volunteers of the Rhondda Lifeguards Club have been stationed here, saving lives at sea whilst their host building crumbles around them.

We believe it's time to bring the building back to its former glory for the benefit of all.



Our Purpose

To transform the Old Lifeguards Building into a dynamic community centre.

Our Vision

Offering all visitors and coastal residents varied opportunities for wellbeing, fun and creative exploration.

Our activities are rooted in environmental education and the unique and beautiful qualities of our coastline and community.

Our People

The entire local community and the wider coastal community. We want to inspire inter-generational belonging and accessibility to the coast for all. Currently spearheaded by a steering committee of local residents, we're here to listen to the ideas of other local people, coastal organisations and businesses who may be interested in a collaborative space.

Follow the journey from idea to action, and join in along the way to help make The Reef your own.

The Space

Transforming the building into 'The Reef – Coastal Exploration Centre' is no small task. As a steering group, we are committed to seeing the neglected building transferred as a community asset and truly restored for the good of the community. We know this will be a multi-year process, but we think the gains are worth it.

With environmental education and protection at the core of our aspirations, sustainable construction is key. We plan to create a carbon neutral building and we're talking to local university researchers at the forefront of renewable building technologies.



A Haven

To restore the building to its former glory, an integral part of our proposition is to provide a fit-for-purpose space for the tireless work of the Rhondda Lifeguards Club. There for us throughout the summer months, they are vital to our thriving coastal community. This provision will also allow for shared facilities such as outdoor showers, changing rooms, a first aid training centre for local water user groups, and the only accessible toilets in the area.

Champions for our blue environment

We'll also host an environmental monitoring station; housing the Wales Coastal Monitoring Centre (WCMC) and their educational hub, designed to foster hands-on experiments and fieldwork. The WCMC will house a state-of-the-art data centre dedicated to monitoring and delivering real-time insights into the changing Welsh coastline. In the face of climate change, this information will empower communities and policy makers alike, and put Barry at the fore.

An inspiring educational space

We plan to create an adaptable and versatile shared educational space to suit the needs of various community groups and educators; a space that will house a full class of children, and also university students, researchers and other educational groups. It will give local facilitators an indoors facility to greatly enhance their coastal field trips.

Art inspired by our coastline

We also plan to host creative programmes which celebrate art being a part of our everyday lives. Inspired by our coastline and community, arts projects will foster joy, imagination, belonging, community, health and wellbeing.



Diverse and collaborative

The Reef will be a place where people connect to celebrate all aspects of the diverse life on our shoreline.

From the Romans who set up a port here, to the wildlife that currently resides in our intertidal zone, and from the ancient geology that shapes our distinctive coastline to the very people using it today, nothing should be excluded from the vision for the space.

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- an events hub
- an accessible bathroom facility
- an indoor base with facilities to complement outdoor activities
- an adaptable classroom available to all ages
- a welcoming space for community groups
- a refuge for appropriate private hire that promotes environment, health and wellbeing
- a secure base for voluntary lifeguards
- a multi-use kitchen facility
- a vector to promote beneficial collaborations for local businesses
- hosting cultural experiences accessible to all members of our town
- Facilities enabling educators, makers, naturalists, environmentalists, artists, therapists to come together and enable people to thrive.