



Co-funded by
the European Union



The 7 Most Endangered 2025

Programme run by **Europa Nostra**,
the European Voice of Civil Society Committed to Cultural Heritage,
with the support of the **European Investment Bank Institute**

Valhalla Swimming Hall Complex Gothenburg, Sweden

Report



(photo: Jonathan Anders Hökklo for FASAD)

European Experts Team

Pablo Fernández-Longoria, Christopher Hurst and Laurie Neale
Advisors to Europa Nostra

September 2026

Foreword and Acknowledgements

While there is still time, before contracts are signed and bulldozers move in, the alternatives should be properly assessed. Gothenburg City Hall's long-standing decision to demolish Valhallabadet should not proceed without such an assessment.

After a week in Gothenburg meeting politicians and other stakeholders, Europa Nostra's experts concluded that demolition is not justified. Selected in 2025 as one of Europe's '7 Most Endangered' heritage sites for its outstanding cultural and social values, Valhallabadet should be preserved.



(photo: Jonathan Anders Hökklo for FASAD)

The expert team thanks the institutions and funding partners who made this report possible. Many thanks are also due to colleagues in Sweden for their exceptional help in providing briefings and organising meetings, and for their warm hospitality.

[Europa Nostra](#) is the European voice of civil society committed to safeguarding and promoting cultural and natural heritage. Since its launch in 2013, the [7 Most Endangered Programme](#) has become a key civil society initiative dedicated to saving Europe's heritage at risk. The 7ME Programme is run by [Europa Nostra](#) with the support of the [European Investment Bank Institute](#). (<https://7mostendangered.eu/>)

Table of Contents

Foreword and Acknowledgements	2
0. SUMMARY	4
1. VALHALLABADET, AN ICONIC BUILDING	5
1.1. THE BUILDING AND ITS HISTORY	5
1.2. DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES	9
2. THE PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE SITE AND THE DESTRUCTION OF VALHALLABADET	10
2.1. THE CURRENT REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL	10
2.2. LACK OF PROTECTED STATUS FOR VALHALLABADET	11
2.3. ALTERNATIVE VISIONS FOR THE SITE	13
2.4. ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL REVIEW AND FINANCING POSSIBILITIES	16
3. RECOMMENDATIONS	21
3.1. CAMPAIGNING BEFORE THE ELECTIONS IN SEPTEMBER	22
3.2. EIBI GRANT	24
ANNEX 1	25
ANNEX 2	27
ANNEX 3	32
ANNEX 4	36

Annexes:

1. Site Plan and Aerial view
2. Photographs
3. Details of missions, people met, meetings
4. References / Partners in the Valhallabadet campaign

(photo: Jonathan Anders Hökklo for FASAD)



0. Summary

The Valhalla Swimming Complex (or as it is known locally, Valhallabadet) is located just outside Gothenburg city centre. It is a public swimming complex, open seven days a week and operating at full capacity, with 500,000 visits a year. Its design won the Bronze Medal for Architectural Design at the 1948 Olympic Games.

From 16 to 21 March 2026, European experts travelled to Gothenburg, Sweden, for a mission related to this site. It is listed among the '7 Most Endangered' heritage sites in Europe for 2025 (within the programme run by Europa Nostra and with the support of the European Investment Bank Institute). In collaboration with representatives from Europa Nostra Sweden and the local heritage group FASAD, the 7ME Expert team participated in a series of meetings aimed at mobilising local and national stakeholders for the preservation of this iconic building.

The Valhalla public swimming pool complex is at risk because the Gothenburg City administration has plans to demolish it to make way for an expanded 'events area' on the site of Valhallabadet and the nearby ice-hockey and concert arena, Scandinavium.

Thanks to FASAD's campaign, supported by Europa Nostra, Valhallabadet has become a recognisable issue in Gothenburg's 2026 municipal election campaign. The clearest evidence is that the 2026 local election compass produced by SVT, Sweden's national public broadcaster, explicitly asks whether construction of the new event area should be stopped. Gotheburgs-Post's interviews with the leading municipal candidates also identify the proposed replacement of Scandinavium and Valhallabadet as one of the campaign's important local issues. This public attention has contributed to the possible breakdown of the previous six-party agreement supporting demolition. Parties still broadly committed to replacement command a majority of the vote, although deep disagreements over financing could prevent the programme from proceeding.

At national level, the campaign to save Valhallabadet highlights weaknesses in Sweden's system for protecting important heritage buildings and sites. Sweden has neither signed nor ratified the Council of Europe's Faro Convention and does not consistently require architectural competitions for major taxpayer-funded projects to follow best practice guidelines. In these respects, Sweden is falling behind European good practice in protecting public funds and citizens' cultural rights.

1. Valhallabadet, an iconic building

1.1. The building and its history

Planning for a large public bath in Gothenburg began amid the far-reaching expansion of social welfare that started in the 1930s and continued after the Second World War. Most households in Gothenburg still lived in cramped housing with limited amenities and used public baths for sanitation. By the end of the 1950s, housing conditions had improved and the purpose of Sweden's public baths had shifted from hygiene towards recreation and swimming skills, reflecting a wider European trend.

The architect and the Olympic Medal

When Valhallabadet opened in 1956, it was Sweden's largest and one of its most modern bathhouses. Local architect Nils Olsson had won a 1947 architectural competition for a new 'Bath and Sports Hall on Skånegatan'. His thoroughly modernist design was subsequently submitted to the architecture category of the 1948 Olympic Art Competition in London.

The building consists of five volumes arranged in relation to the dominant volume of the main swimming hall. None of its façades was designed as a rear elevation. The yellow-brick façades refer to the industrial architecture of the neighbouring Gårda district. The frame and roof structures are concrete, with welded steel beams supporting the copper-clad roof. Floors are finished in marble and tile. Though the original glazed roof lantern has been removed and replaced by artificial lighting, the swimming hall still receives most of its daylight through rows of south-facing windows. This glazed wall originally overlooked an open area with sunbeds and outdoor pools. Stairs at the end of the hall led to raised, south-facing sun terraces with showers.



The main swimming hall South facade originally faced an outdoor swimming and sunbathing area. In 1987, a 50m indoor pool was built on this location. To the right is the boiler house. Next page: Sawtooth roof over showering and changing areas, alluding to industrial area to the east.
(photos: Photo Antiquum AB through Johanna Roos and Victoria Ask)



Co-funded by
the European Union



Around the corner to the North is the entrance and administrative offices



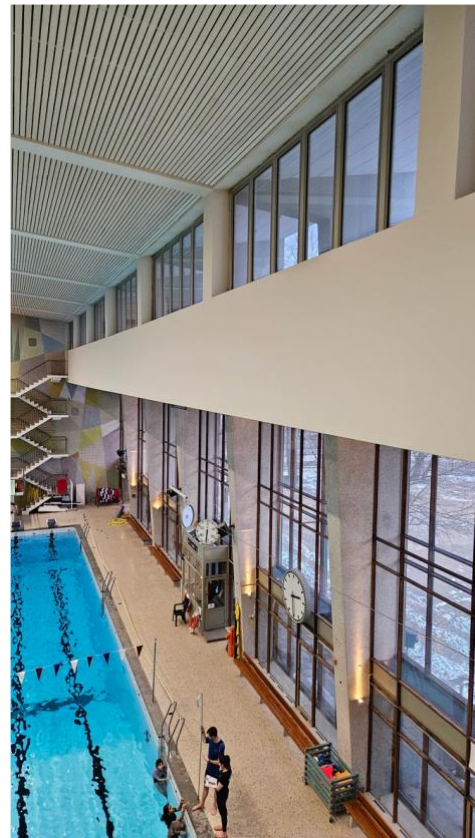
(photo: Laurie Neale)



(photo: Jonathan Anders Hökklo)



Raised sunbathing terrace (here in November)



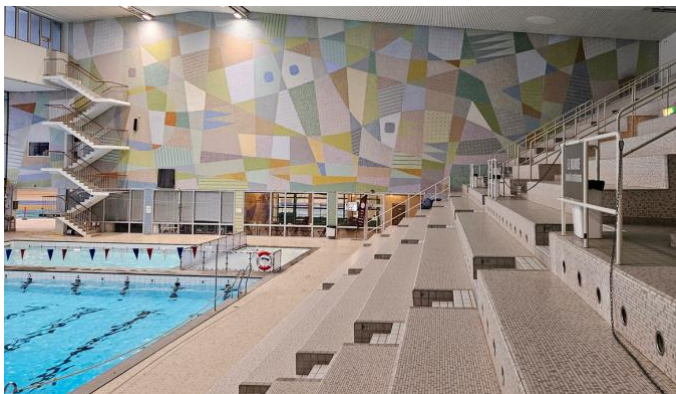
The glass wall on the south side of the main swimming hall, with the sun terraces at the top, which is accessed by staircases at either end.
Along the east wall of the main swimming hall is the distinctive and sculptural structure of diving platforms.

(photo: Jonathan Anders Hökklo) >



The end walls of Valhallabadet's main swimming hall are covered by mosaics designed by the artist Nils Wedel, whose influences included Fernand Léger. The composition is abstract but incorporates figurative references to fish and swimming. These works of outstanding artistic quality were manufactured by Kosta glassworks and installed by Italian craftsmen. The Roman baths at basement level are decorated by the Finnish ceramic artist Taisto Kaasinen, who trained at Arabia in Helsinki. The combination of spatial design, natural light and artistic surfaces earned Valhallabadet the Bronze Medal for Architectural Design at the 1948 Olympic Games, the final year in which such medals were awarded.

Valhallabadet's artistic decoration is exceptional. Its architects took great care to make visitors feel that the bath belonged to them. The building's aesthetic power comes from its architectural composition, with close attention paid to fittings, railings and signage. A side entrance beneath a loggia creates a simple, open and welcoming impression. The building's low scale continues inside as visitors pass through generous changing rooms into the swimming hall, which opens into a space filled with light and colour.



Mosaic patterns on walls and terraced seating

(photos: Photo Antiquum AB through Johanna Roos and Victoria Ask)



The Roman bath walls have handmade ceramic tiles made by the Finnish ceramist and sculptor Taisto Kaasinen.

When Valhallabadet was completed in 1956, it provided separate sections for men, women and children, all on one level and available at a single price. Older baths commonly sold first-, second- and third-class tickets that provided access to different facilities. The men's section was initially slightly larger than the women's, an imbalance corrected in the 1970s. The design also reflected a deliberate commitment to children: rather than visiting merely to be washed, they were encouraged to bathe, swim and play. A dedicated children's splash pool was built on the sunny outdoor terrace.

The connection between inside and outside was integral to Valhallabadet's design. Its glazed wall originally faced a 3,000-square-metre open area with sunbeds and outdoor pools. A major change occurred in 1987, when the 50-metre outdoor pool built in 1967 was replaced by an indoor pool of the same length. Much of the south-facing sun terrace was lost or ceased to function as intended. The remaining space, now more shaded, is used haphazardly for storage. The main swimming hall, however, has retained its original character.

Another major external change occurred in 2008, when a new entrance building was added on the western façade, including a lift to the basement level.

The site around Valhallabadet

Valhallabadet lies within culturally important neighbourhoods in Heden, including Gårda and Burgårdsparken. It is located next to a small river, the Mölndalsån. Between it and the east side of Valhallabadet, is a service road, and beside that, a well-frequented pedestrian and bicycle path that follows the length of the Mölndalsån, between the major road to the south on which is located the main entrances of the Swedish Fair and hotels, and the north past the outdoor Ullevi football stadium (see Annex 1). There is a lightly-built raised passageway over the waterway, linking a multi-story carpark across to the side of the Swedish Fair complex. The existing Valhallabadet building, with its low height and varied volumes, creates a comfortable and human-scaled edge to these important public walking and cycling arteries towards the centre of town (see Annexe 2).

Between the Valhalla building and the Ullevi stadium is also a public park and green space, near the Mölndalsån waterway and the pathways, which is secluded and valuable for the surrounding built up neighbourhoods.

What has happened to other pools from this period

Demolishing Valhallabadet would destroy an architecturally important building with an artistic interior of exceptional quality. It would also contribute to the continuing loss or alteration of Sweden's stock of 1950s bathhouses. Modernist buildings still struggle to secure recognition of their cultural and historical value compared with older structures. Ironically, Swedish modernist architecture from this period is when the country's architecture enjoyed the most international respect and renown. Around ten Swedish bathhouses dating from the turn of the twentieth century are listed today, but only one from the 1950s has that protection.

Valhallabadet's cultural and historical importance may lie above all in the social history it represents: the emergence of an inclusive welfare state in which ability to pay did not determine access to leisure. Facilities of this kind have undoubtedly contributed to Sweden's high level of swimming proficiency.

Valhallabadet should be regarded as a work of art. Claims that the building is derelict and beyond rescue are not supported by its present condition or continued intensive use.

1.2. Development possibilities

The current state of the building & degree of renovation needed

Valhallabadet remains in an acceptable technical condition and is intensively used, receiving around 500,000 visits a year. Original interior materials, including marble, clinker tiles and fine timber, survive. Although the building has been altered during almost 70 years of use, most interventions have been limited in scope and respectful of the original design and workmanship. The main pool hall, the building's centrepiece, retains its tiled spectator terraces, mosaics, diving tower, stairs and glazed southern wall.

Nevertheless, the cumulative effect of minor changes threatens the building's original character. A conservation management plan should guide its future maintenance and alteration.

2. The proposed plan for the site and the destruction of Valhallabadet

Valhallabadet is one of three interconnected facilities in the original part of Gothenburg's **event area**. All three emerged from the same 1948 architectural competition: Valhallabadet opened in 1956, the Sports Halls in 1967 and Scandinavium in 1971.

The Scandinavium concert hall, with seating for 12,000 people, has helped the city of Gothenburg establish itself as a regional centre for events. <https://www.goteborg.com/en/places/scandinavium>. The Scandinavium is also home to Frölunda Hockey Club, a premier professional ice hockey team that competes in the top-tier Swedish Hockey League. This event area also includes the Swedish Exhibition and Congress Centre <https://en.svenskamassan.se> and within the broader area are also hotels and Liseberg amusement park. These facilities are of great economic significance for Gothenburg's tourism and hospitality industries.

Valhallabadet, by contrast, is important above all to Gothenburg's residents. It is owned by Higab, a real estate company that manages publicly-owned buildings in Gothenburg.

2.1. The current redevelopment proposal

The municipality decided many years ago to demolish all the buildings on the site to accommodate an expanded event area. The original justification is now unclear, but this is the only option that has been developed and the only proposal currently under consideration.

The original proposal in 2015 was to renovate Scandinavium, which was already more than 40 years old. During the following years, the municipality's political parties reached a broader compromise that included other investments in the city and provided for a completely new concert arena with 16,000 seats. The additional capacity was intended to attract major international performers and events, which often require venues holding at least 15,000 people.

A number of constraints were placed on this development: the existing Scandinavium could not be shut until the new concert hall was opened; swimming facilities for the local population should be maintained, but an Olympic-sized pool and training facilities for elite athletes should be added; the new concert hall should be next to the Exhibition and Congress Centre to allow synergies between the two event sites.

Only one plan was developed to meet these constraints. Valhallabadet would be demolished to allow the concert hall to be built immediately beside the present Scandinavium. New swimming facilities would be constructed on a car park across the road, while the existing Scandinavium site would be redeveloped with a hotel and offices.

An architectural competition in 2025 chose a design that met the above planning requirements – the “Arena” project. It involves the staged new build of the swimming facilities and concert hall following the phased destruction of the current facilities.

This strategy entails the demolition of Valhallabadet. Given the building's iconic status, the first question is why it lacks legal protection that would require its retention within any redevelopment.

2.2. Lack of protected status for Valhallabadet

The process for listing a building in Sweden is governed by the Cultural Heritage Act. Responsibility rests with the relevant County Administrative Board (CAB), a regional body that includes heritage specialists but does not necessarily conduct public consultation.

The CAB is not obliged to list a building even when the statutory criteria are met, and it rarely acts against the wishes of either a private or public owner. The stated concerns are that owners also have rights, may be entitled to compensation and might neglect a building following a contested listing. Avoiding compensation costs appears to be an important consideration when listing is declined despite a building's inherent quality.

Despite this reluctance to impose protection, several thousand buildings have been listed across Sweden. Once listed, a building loses protection only in exceptional circumstances, and development plans must take its status into account. Owners may accept or even benefit economically from listing where a property can be considered independently. Their interests may be very different, however, when a smaller heritage asset forms part of a much larger development site, as at Valhallabadet.

In practice, the Municipality of Gothenburg therefore has a *de facto* veto over listing by the County Administrative Board. The national supervisory authority, the National Heritage Board, almost never overturns a regional CAB decision. A decision may be challenged in court within three weeks, and judgment on such an appeal must also be delivered within three weeks.

The CAB does not assess the broader public-interest trade-offs within a particular development proposal. These are addressed through the municipal development plan, which must comply with the Planning and Building Act. The CAB normally assumes that this process has been followed correctly and does not override the municipal plan, although procedural infringements may be challenged in court. Once adopted, municipal plans commonly remain in force despite a change of municipal government.

Although the Gothenburg CAB concluded that Valhallabadet met the criteria for protection, it did not list the building because the municipality had already decided to demolish it.

Therefore, the only realistic route to protect the Valhallabadet today is to convince the Gothenburg municipality to change its development plan.

A private initiative sought listed-building status for Valhallabadet under the Cultural Environment Act in 2013. The County Administrative Board rejected the application. In its 2015 decision, the CAB stated: “The County Administrative Board shares the view that Valhallabadet has very high cultural and historical values and, in view of these, the facility could reasonably be declared a building monument. However, according to the Cultural Environment Act, the protection regulations for a building monument must, as far as possible, be designed in agreement with its owner, in the case of Valhallabadet, politically through its owner, the City of Gothenburg. As far as the CAB can assess the situation, there is currently no direct threat to Valhallabadet, but there is an ongoing discussion within the city that may affect the future of the facility.”

A new request to declare Valhallabadet a building monument was submitted in 2022, and again rejected by the CAB.

2.3. Alternative visions for the site

Gothenburg's heritage organisations and individual campaigners have commented on the city's plans for the event area for a decade. The proposed demolition of the iconic Scandinavium and Valhallabadet buildings has prompted sustained and forceful criticism of the planning programme.

Local architects, notably V|S and Krook & Tjäder, have developed alternatives to the current plan. V|S, an association of locally-active firms supporting the transformation and preservation of Valhallabadet, proposes redeveloping the cores of Valhallabadet and Scandinavium and grouping them with new facilities beneath a large roof. <https://visgoteborg.se/>. Although the original buildings would be retained, the enclosing structure would remain massive and could create urban-design problems similar to those of the city's proposal.



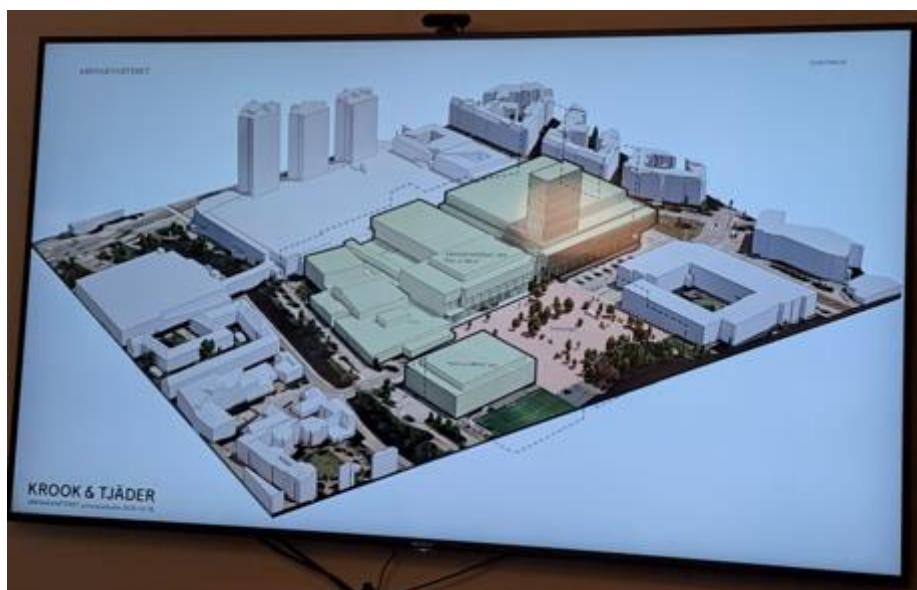
V|S Architects proposal for developing the new 'events area' incorporating Valhallabadet

In 2022, real estate consultant Anders Carlsson, in collaboration with the architectural firm Krook & Tjäder, produced a proposal in which both Scandinavium and Valhallabadet are preserved. The proposal takes into account the entire planning package, including Scandinavium, a new central pool, a new multi-arena and new sports halls. The proposal is called Arenakvarteret 2030 (or the Arenablock 2030).

In the Krook & Tjäder proposal a steel structure could be built over the current Scandinavium, allowing the roof to be raised to accommodate the desired increase in seating capacity. The existing building would be fully integrated into the new venue. The site around the Valhallabadet could be developed to host the elite sports facilities specified in the remit of the current Arena plan while preserving the existing Valhallabadet building. This would allow the reuse of a maximum of the current structures on the site. <https://www.krooktjader.se/projekt/arenakvarteret-2030>



The Krook & Tjäder proposal is based on the preservation of Valhallabadet in its entirety. Scandinavian is preserved, but is enlarged.



Roof view of K&T proposal

Arenakvarteret 2030 starts from the recognition that demolition and new construction are highly resource-intensive and generate substantial carbon emissions. It argues that decisions taken now must minimise environmental impacts if climate change is to be limited. It is also based on the importance of preserving the city's architectural heritage. The proposal emphasises the social sustainability that is promoted through the area's current activities with facilities for non-professional sports, exercise and school sports.

2.4. Economic, environmental and social review and financing possibilities

What is the best way to deliver the City of Gothenburg's vision? As we see, two broad approaches merit comparison: demolish the existing buildings and start again, or build on what is already there. It is useful to examine these two visions – the current Arena project of destruction followed by new build versus renovation and reuse as with Arenakvarteret 2030 – according to a number of key criteria.

1. Cost

The current Arena project will be expensive. Its reported budget of around SEK 15 billion is based on approximate construction costs per square metre drawn from comparable projects. At this stage of design, the figure must be treated as indicative. Considerable uncertainty remains over the final cost of such a complex project, particularly following the sharp post-pandemic increase in material and labour costs.

There are many reasons why costs rise during construction, and other projects in Gothenburg can provide recent examples of what can go wrong. For example, a very topical example is the West Link project, which is currently under construction.

<https://bransch.trafikverket.se/en/startpage/projects/Railway-construction-projects/The-West-Link-ProjectVastlanken/>. This involves the construction of 8km of double track railway in the centre of Gothenburg, of which 6km is tunnelled, as well as 3 underground stations. The costs of this project have increased from the original estimate of SEK 20 billion to SEK 71 billion.

Good practice for complex projects would require a contingency at this stage of design of between one-third and one-half above preliminary engineering estimates, implying a potential total cost of around SEK 20 billion.

This mark-up could be reduced as the design progresses and mitigation measures are built into the project management plan. However, this is the mark-up that should be applied at this stage. See, for example, the UK Treasury's guide to project appraisal:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government>

The renovation-and-reuse scenario develops the existing buildings. Renovation also carries a risk of cost overruns, but its starting cost would be lower than that of demolition followed by new construction. Current estimates remain preliminary, but the potential savings can reasonably be expected to amount to several billion kronor.

Renovation would require Scandinavium to close for a season while its roof was raised. This would cause disruption, but avoiding any closure comes at a much greater cost. Cost overruns would ultimately have consequences for municipal taxes, the quality of other public services, ticket prices or, more likely, some combination of the three.

2. The global environment

Gothenburg is a pioneering city for the green transition. It participates in the EU's mission of 100 climate-neutral and smart cities. Indeed, because of its leadership it has been chosen as one of ten cities that will act as a mentor to other cities across Europe, the only Swedish city to be so chosen. The Gothenburg city government proudly displays this honour in a plaque prominently displayed in the entrance of its City Hall.

How do the two development scenarios compare against this backdrop? Buildings completed under either scenario should achieve similar operational energy standards. The principal difference therefore lies in embodied carbon, particularly the emissions associated with producing steel and concrete. Because renovation requires far less new material than demolition and replacement, its carbon footprint would be substantially lower.



Plaques in the entrance hall of Gothenburg's City Hall, showing the city's pride in its Climate credentials.

(photos: Laurie Neale)

As an initial estimate, renovation and reuse could reduce the project's embodied carbon footprint by as much as half. A rapid carbon assessment would provide more robust estimates of the environmental consequences of the two alternatives. The buildings and construction sector accounts for 37% of global greenhouse-gas emissions (UNEP).

3. The social dimension

Buildings sit within communities. The Scandinavium is largely used by people who come from outside the neighbourhood for events, but Valhallabadet is a focal point of the community for all age groups, from children learning to swim to pensioners meeting friends for shared exercise.

Valhallabadet has substantial social value. For generations it has been one of Gothenburg's most successful meeting places, bringing together people of different ages and backgrounds. This role reflects the democratic ambition, expressed in plans from the 1940s, to create a genuine 'people's bath'. A social institution of this kind develops organically over decades and cannot simply be recreated in a new building. Its preservation would protect an established meeting place in an increasingly segregated city.

As mentioned, the proposed development lies within culturally important neighbourhoods in Heden, including Gårda and Burgårdsparken. Any intervention should respect the scale of these communities and preserve buildings that contribute to residents' sense of identity. Renovation would meet this test. By contrast, the new-build concept would introduce massive structures into the existing urban fabric and overwhelm the surrounding neighbourhoods.

The new 'Arena' proposal is massive: the proposed event venues would stand on a podium several storeys high, creating an imposing and seemingly impenetrable wall at street level and beside the currently pleasant route along the Mölndalsån. Locating the main public spaces above this podium would leave the streets below deserted and alienating. Development on this scale would sever the site's relationship with the neighbourhood.

The city's plan to drastically expand the volume of the 'events area' has concentrated on achieving top numbers of spectators in over-sized buildings, while neglecting the lived experience of the citizens who would have to try to manoeuvre around them. Gothenburg has a long pedestrian

tradition of beautiful avenues and boulevards. Cities everywhere are trying to encourage their citizens to move around by foot or bicycle. Such foot and cycle paths as the one beside the Mölndalsån, need to be cherished and not be overwhelmed by buildings designed with no consideration for those travelling beside them at ground level.

4. Project management.

The redevelopment-and-reuse scenario would be easier to manage because individual facilities could be developed relatively independently. By contrast, the current Arena project requires one component to be completed before the next can begin, allowing delays to cascade across the programme.

Redevelopment does have one negative consequence: It will require the Scandinavium to be shut for one year while the roof is raised. This implies potential lost revenue for the concert hall.

Separate accounts are not published for the Scandinavium, but Göteborg & Co the municipal company for managing tourism, culture and events reported SEK 169.9 million operating income in 2025.

https://goteborgco.se/uploads/2026/03/ENG_GbgCo_Arsredovisning_Hallbarhetsredovisning_2025_Tillganglig.pdf?utm_

This includes revenue from Got Event, a subsidiary which is responsible for managing the Scandinavium as well as the football stadiums of Ullevi (43,000 capacity) and Gamla Ullevi (18,000 capacity), as well as Valhallabadet. Göteborg & Co accounts show it received a payment in 2025 from Got Event of SEK 30.7 million. The numbers are not in the public domain, but it is very likely that the annual revenue and profits of the Scandinavium are measured in the SEK 10s millions.

This includes payments from the Frölunda Hockey Club for use of the Scandinavium, but not revenue from ticket sales and merchandising which remain with the club. For the 2024/25 season, Frölunda HC reported revenue of SEK 224 million and a profit of SEK 17.3 million.

https://www.frolundahockey.com/article/4osaxy-24601/view?utm_

The hockey club has stated that it could find an alternative location for one season, so the above figures should not be seriously weakened even if the Scandinavium were to be shut.

Consequently, the cost of closing Scandinavium for one year, measured in tens of millions of kronor, must be weighed against the additional cost of the current proposal, measured in hundreds of millions. Avoiding even a temporary closure comes at a high price.

Taken together, these considerations show that renovation and reuse perform better than complete replacement in terms of cost, environmental impact, social integration and project-management risk.

This makes it all the more striking that the current proposal has never been tested against the alternatives. The initial “feasibility” study simply examined the feasibility of implementing the politically decided plan <https://ipw3.com/project/gothenburg-scandinavium/>. The subsequent architectural competition defined the required outcome leaving no discretion for architects to propose alternatives. <https://whitearkitekter.com/news/white-arkitekter-wins-competition-to-design-gothenburgs-new-arena-quarter/>

This approach conflicts with the recommendations of leading professional bodies. In April 2026, the International Union of Architects (UIA) and Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) reiterated that architectural competitions create greater value when solutions emerge through the competition rather than being predetermined. Design briefs should retain sufficient flexibility to encourage innovation and better solutions.

The potential waste of public money is very real.

3. Recommendations

Valhallabadet was included among Europe's 7 Most Endangered heritage sites in the hope that this will help secure its preservation, the improvement of the surrounding green spaces and proper long-term maintenance of the building.

The alternatives should now be properly reconsidered. It is certain that a proper study of the alternatives would lead to the preservation of this important building, which embodies the optimistic vision of the future in which it was conceived.

In particular, the City of Gothenburg should fundamentally reassess its plans for the event area, recognising the value of the area's history and existing buildings both within and beyond the site. Renewal and new construction should complement the existing fabric. Revised plans should respect the scale of buildings within the area and the historical value of the neighbourhoods that surround it.

With a more open approach from the City of Gothenburg, the area can continue to attract visitors and tourists while remaining, above all, a place for Gothenburg's residents. A new plan should make careful use of the area's many functions and assets, including Valhallabadet.

The environmentally damaging effects of demolition and new construction must be considered in all decisions.

Planning should also preserve and strengthen existing green spaces and create new ones. Mölndalsån should play a central role in the area's future.

The city's proposals would affect an area far wider than the event site itself. Neighbourhoods on both sides are designated under the Environmental Code as being of national interest for cultural-heritage protection. The large-scale facilities proposed to replace Valhallabadet, the Sports Halls and Scandinavium would seriously harm both the stone-built city and Gårda's smaller-scale industrial environment.

Further recommendations would include the Swedish government to ratify and implement the Council of Europe's Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society. The Faro Convention gives agency to the communities in which heritage buildings and sites exist to have influence and a say as to the use and future of said buildings and sites beyond that of the legal owners, be they private or public <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention>. This recommendation is important for all heritage public spaces in Sweden and requires a fundamental shift in attitude with regard to human rights and responsibilities. It is time that Sweden recognises that its current system of heritage protections falls short of contemporary European practice, and that the country should join its European neighbours in this more progressive attitude to public citizenship and laws by signing and ratifying the Faro Convention.

Sweden should also require open architectural competitions for all major public buildings and projects, in line with ACE and UIA recommendations. Competition briefs should allow scope for alternative solutions rather than predetermining the outcome through restrictive requirements, as occurred with Gothenburg's event-area competition.

3.1. Campaigning before the elections in September

Historically, a six-party group in the Gothenburg municipal council, with more than three-quarters of the seats, agreed to the Arena project. These are:

Centre Party / Centern (C)
Democrats / Demokraterna (D)
Liberals / Liberalerna (L)
Moderates / Moderatern (M)
Social Democrats / Socialdemokraterna (S)
Left Party / Vänsterpartiet (V)

Three parties traditionally opposed the proposal:

Christian Democrats / Kristdemokraterna (KD)
Green Party / Miljöpartiet (MP)
Sweden Democrats / Sverigedemokraterna (SD)

Thanks to the actions of FASAD, with the support of Europa Nostra, Valhallabadet has become a recognisable issue in the 2026 Gothenburg municipal campaign, although usually as part of the wider multi- billion Arena controversy rather than as a standalone heritage question.

The clearest evidence is that SVT's (the national TV broadcaster) 2026 local election compass explicitly asks whether construction of the Arena should be stopped. Göteborgs-Posten's series of interviews with the leading municipal candidates also identifies replacing Scandinavium and Valhallabadet as one of the campaign's major local questions.

The positions of the parties that opposed demolition are now broadly as follows:

- **MP:** unequivocally campaigns to preserve, renovate and extend Valhallabadet and Scandinavium. It identifies the issue as especially important, citing cost, carbon emissions and heritage.
- **KD:** wants Arenastaden stopped and the existing buildings upgraded, arguing that Göteborg cannot afford the investment and operating costs.
- **SD:** opposes demolition and presents Valhallabadet as an example of municipal waste and an unnecessary prestige project.

The parties that previously supported demolition now take the following positions:

- **V:** its position has shifted materially. It still wants a new central swimming facility, but now says it has no interest in either building the new arena or demolishing Valhallabadet following the breakdown of the previous cross-party agreement.
- **S, M, L, C and D** continue broadly to support replacing Valhallabadet under the Arenastaden programme, although they disagree sharply over financing. S favours borrowing, while M, L and D have supported partial financing through the sale of municipal leasehold assets. The Liberals explicitly describe Valhallabadet as 'worn out' and argue that it must be replaced.

This means the old six-party agreement supporting replacement is fracturing. Based on the latest polls, the parties still broadly committed to replacement account for over **50%** of the vote, although their strong disagreements over financing could well prevent the programme from proceeding.

3.2. EIBI Grant

The FASAD campaign, supported by the EIBI grant, aims to prevent the demolition of Valhallabadet and promote development that safeguards its architectural and social values.

The campaign is multi-pronged and includes billboard messaging (secured at a preferential price) on a large rotating electronic messaging billboard prominently located on the corner in front of the Scandinavium and just down the street from Valhallabadet. With its central location, in the heart of the event area of the inner city, the billboard is seen by thousands of passers-by every day. It shows the values of the 7ME Valhallabadet site, its international recognition, and that it is in fact possible to renovate and develop instead of demolishing it. The ads have been running from mid-April until the election, with a summer break between mid-June until mid-August.

The campaign also includes city-wide posters, including on trams, and the distribution of flyers, particularly in surrounding neighbourhoods. Consistent visual design reinforces the message across the billboard, posters and flyers.

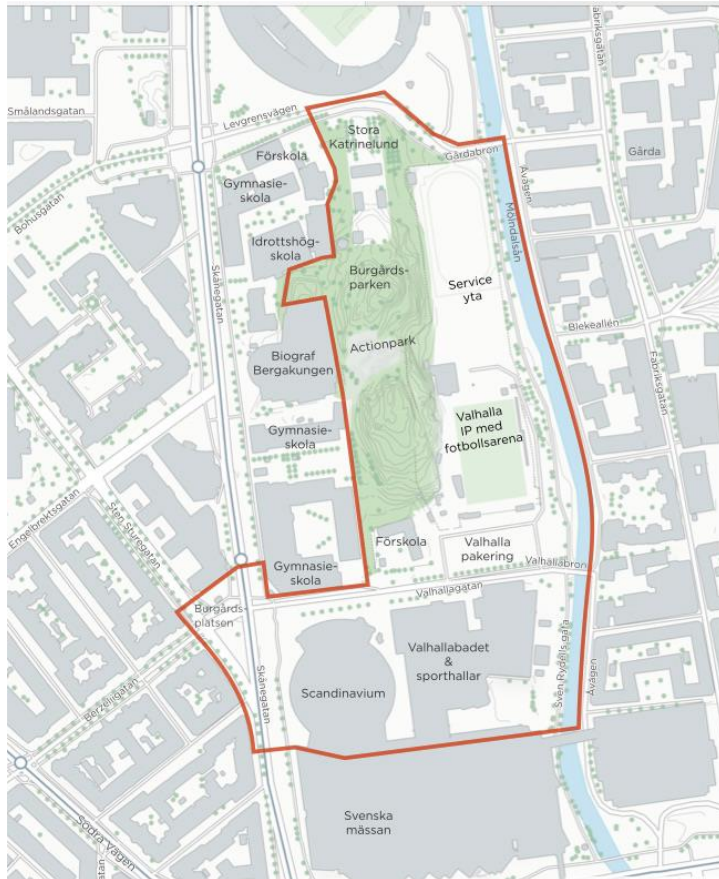
Caps and badges carry additional campaign messages and have been distributed to Valhallabadet's thousands of users, who will also be invited to sign a petition calling for the complex to be saved. A plaque bearing the 7ME was will be installed at the entrance. Supporters were encouraged to wear the campaign materials before the election and at key events, demonstrating the scale of public opposition to the city's event-area plans.

Taken together, these activities will demonstrate to politicians that opposition to demolition is strong, organised and determined.

Annex 1

Plans of site, of Valhallabadet, and Aerial view of surroundings

(Images and documentation provided by Europa Nostra Sweden)



Map showing ongoing and planned development around the discussed area, which is highlighted in red. Valhallabadet is located in the lower right part. Immediately to the left are the sports halls, and to the far left the arena Scandinavium.

In the south, below the red line, is the Swedish Fair area, which is attached and accessible to the Scandinavium.

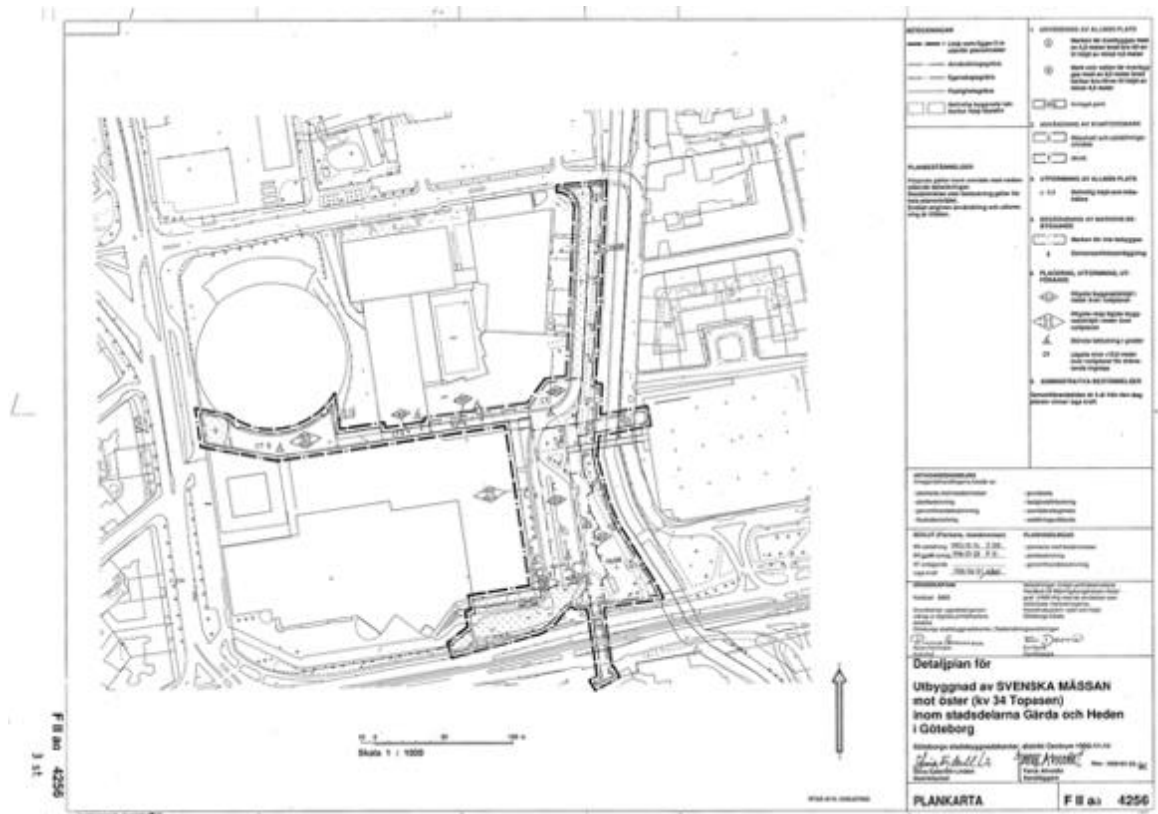
North of Valhallabadet, is a parking lot and the potential area for expanding the swimming facilities. The centrally placed public park is to remain.

At the top of the map, another (outdoor) arena, Ullevi, is a seasonal venue, and of very large scale.



This photo is upside down with respect to the plan above)

Current aerial view of the area with Valhallabadet to the left, and to its right, the sports halls and the Scandinavium arena, all in the centre-ground. To the top left, the Swedish Fair with its three towers, which has gradually been given opportunities to expand over the area. North of Valhallagatan (street)(below right in the photos), towards which the bath's entrance faces, lies, among other things, the green area Burgårdsparken and the football arena, Ullevi.



City plans for an expansion towards the eastern districts, joining the various venues (1995). This site plan is useful to understand the placement of the Scandinavium - top left, beside the sports halls - top centre, and the Valhallabadet - top right. Below left are the buildings of the Swedish Fair.



(This photo is upside down with respect to the plan above.)

The City of Gothenburg presents its 'events area' proposal as: A mixed city with increased capacity for arenas and sports halls. The area's new structure builds on the grid city and connects the surrounding districts. The structure together with the addition of several functions and greater mixing will contribute to the area being experienced more as being part of the inner city. In the image, the planned new tall building for the Swedish Fair is also illustrated, the tall building in gray in the background behind the arena.

Annex 2

Photographs

A walk towards the ‘events area’ and Valhallabadet: approaching and passing first the Scandinavium, past the Sports Halls, and Valhallabadet itself. Then around the corner and heading south beside the Mölndalsån stream. And back, heading north towards the Ullevi football stadium.

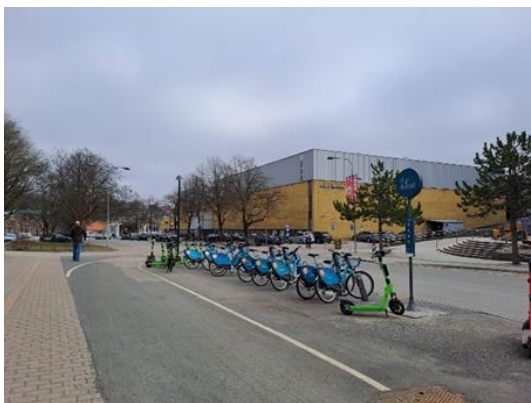
(photos: Laurie Neale)



The Scandinavium



Note the electronic billboard used in the Action Plan



Turning left towards the Sports Halls



Looking south with the Scandinavium on the right, hotels, and the Swedish Fair/Congress Centre behind.



Co-funded by
the European Union



European
Investment Bank | Institute



The Sports Halls with Valhallabadet further along



Entrance to the Valhallabadet



Rounding the corner, changing areas on the east side



Boiler house beside main swimming hall building



50m indoor pool behind trees. Right: Boiler house



Carpark on left across water, Swedish Fair on right



Co-funded by
the European Union



Foot + cycle paths pass under passageway to carpark



About face, going north, with Swedish Fair on right



Walking northwards under passageway



Continuing north with Valhallabadet Boiler house on left



Foot + cycle paths continue northwards alongside
Ullevi stadium



Ullevi stadium

Additional photos of Valhallabadet (photos: Laurie Neale)



Entrance hall with stairs down to spa area



Or forwards towards the main swimming hall



Spa below with Roman bath, changing nooks



Spa massage area



Up to date and well functioning mechanical machinery keeping water clean and to temperature.

Viewing window to check on water clarity >



(photo above: Jonathan Anders Hökklo)





Olympic sized 50m pool added in 1987.



Baby and learners pool



7ME plaque to be enamelled to raise awareness to the threats facing Valhallabadet.

Annex 3

Details of missions, people met, meetings

From 16 to 21 March 2026, European experts travelled to Gothenburg, Sweden, for a mission related to the city's Valhalla Swimming Hall Complex (Valhallabadet). The mission team consisted of **Christopher Hurst**, **Laurie Neale** and **Pablo Longoria** (virtually) on behalf of the 7 Most Endangered Programme.

In collaboration with representatives from Europa Nostra Sweden and the local heritage group FASAD, a series of meetings were held, aimed at mobilising local and national stakeholders for the preservation of Gothenburg's Valhallabadet. The local delegation included **Tina Wik** and **Kersti Berggren** from Europa Nostra Sweden, and **Monica Bengtson**, **Filip Laurits** and **Magnus Almung** representing the local architectural heritage protection group 'FASAD'.

The team met stakeholders to develop a thorough understanding of the issues surrounding the campaign to save Valhallabadet.

On 16 March, Chris Hurst met with **Eva Dahlström Rittsél**, Senior Advisor, and **Maria Barkin**, Legal Advisor at the Swedish Heritage Board, to understand Sweden's Cultural Heritage Act (1998) and the process for protecting important monuments and sites.

On 17 March, the expert team met with Professor Emeritus **Claes Caldenby** and **Jenny Sjöholm**, representing the Swedish Association for Building Preservation, and **Emma Svanberg**, ACAN architect, to better understand the importance of Valhallabadet to the community and to Swedish society. Later in the mission, the team met with **Johanna Westfelt**, Member of the Board of FASAD, and **Anders Svensson**, former Chair of the City Planning department, to further understand the workings and constraints facing that department.

At the meetings, the expert team laid out the importance of valorising and protecting the outstanding cultural heritage of Valhallabadet. They gained a broad understanding of the many stakeholders involved, and of the threats facing this European icon of modernist architecture, as well as of the complexities involved in supporting the local community and its heritage activists.



Welcome and introduction dinner with: **Kersti Berggen** (EN Sweden), **Laurie Neale** (EN), **Filip Laurits** and **Monica Bengston** (FASAD), **Emma Svanberg** (ACAN architect), Chris Hurst (EN), Professor emeritus **Claes Caldenby** (Centre for Built Culture U of Gothenburg) and **Jenny Sjöholm** (Swedish Association for Building Preservation)

Photos: Laurie Neale



On 18 March, the team visited Valhallabadet and its urban setting. **Pierre Solberg**, Director of Valhallabadet, led an interior tour that highlighted the bright, airy main pool hall and the modern mechanical plant below, which maintains water temperature and quality. The site visit also demonstrated the potential impact of a vast new Arena on the surrounding environment and neighbourhoods.

Pierre Solberg, (photo: Jonathan Anders Hökklo)

During the following days, the expert team met several architectural practices presenting different approaches to renovating and redeveloping the swimming complex and its surroundings. **Andreas Haukeland** and **Emma Forsberg** represented V|S, an association of locally active firms supporting the transformation and preservation of Valhallabadet. They presented a proposal to redevelop the cores of Valhallabadet and Scandinavium and group them with new facilities beneath a large roof. **Pontus Orrbacke** of Krook & Tjäder Architects presented an alternative in which both buildings would be redeveloped while retaining their separate identities.

Emma Svanberg and **Benoit**

Marie of ACAN presented a

detailed analysis supporting careful restoration of the swimming complex. **Thomas Pettersson** of the Gothenburg Local Heritage Federation placed Valhallabadet within the wider history of the city's development.



Emma Svanberg and **Benoit Marie** presenting their detailed historical survey of Valhallabadet, on the left showing the south facade and outdoor swimming pool, on the right showing the cross-section of the pool and changing areas. (photos: Laurie Neale)

The team also met **Johan Lundin** of White Arkitekter, who presented the practice's winning 2025 design for redevelopment of the site following the demolition of Valhallabadet and Scandinavium. The competition brief excluded any option that retained Valhallabadet or Scandinavium.

The mission team met elected Municipal Council members to understand the political context of the redevelopment decision. On 19 March, the team met **Axel Josefsson** of the Moderate Party (M), City Hall spokesperson for the six parties that had agreed to the Arena project and the demolition of Valhallabadet and Scandinavium. This was followed by a meeting with **Johan Zandin** of the Left Party (V), Vice-Chair of the City Planning Office, who had been appointed to implement the project.



(On the photo: **Chris Hurst** (EN), **Monica Bengtson** and **Magnus Almung** (FASAD), **Kersti Berggren** and **Tina Wik** (EN Sweden), **Johan Zandin** (V.Chair, City Planning Office. Photo: Laurie Neale)

The following day, the team met representatives of the three smaller parties that, for different reasons, supported preserving Valhallabadet and Scandinavium: **Max Reijer** and Deputy Mayor **Karin Pleijel** of the Green Party (MP); Deputy Mayor **Dan-Ove Marcelind** of the Christian Democrats (KD); and **Timothy Tréville**, group leader of the Sweden Democrats (SD).



Meeting with the City Councillors wanting to save Valhallabadet. **Pablo Longaria** (EN) joining us online. (Photos: Jonathan Anders Hökklo)



Laurie Neale (EN), **Karin Pleijel** (Dep. Mayor), **Max Reijer**, **Chris Hurst** (EN), **Kersti Berggren** (EN SE), and **Monica Bengtson** and **Magnus Almung** (FASAD).

To understand the possible monument protections available for Valhallabadet, the team met on 19 March with **Sandra Brantebäck**, Head of the Community Department (Samhällsavdelningen), and **Lena Emanuelsson**, antiquarian, of The County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelsen).

The mission generated substantial media attention. Interviews were broadcast on local television and subsequently repeated nationally, while the visit was also covered in numerous print and digital outlets, including an opinion piece in Göteborgs-Posten.



photo: Jonathan Anders Hökklo)

7ME expert team, local and representing Europa Nostra: **Monica Bengtson** (FASAD), **Laurie Neale** (EN), **Kersti Berggren** (EN SE), **Chris Hurst** (EN), **Tina Wik** (EN SE), and **Magnus Almung** (FASAD). **Filip Laurits** (FASAD) is absent from the photo, and **Pablo Longaria** (EN) joined meetings digitally.

Annex 4

Partners in the Valhallabadet campaign

FASAD identifies and documents buildings and urban environments in the Gothenburg area that face demolition or damaging alteration. A central aim is to raise public awareness of the cultural values at risk from urban-development projects.

President Filip Laurits: FASAD. e-mail: hej@foreningenfasad.se. <http://foreningenfasad.se/>

Monica Bengtson, Vice Chair, FASAD, Magnus Almung, Architect, Board Member, FASAD

The Gothenburg Local Heritage Federation brings together associations and individuals interested in the city and its preservation. It promotes knowledge of Gothenburg from historical, topographical and artistic perspectives and works to ensure that historical and aesthetic considerations inform the city's transformation and development.

President Thomas Pettersson, *Göteborgs Hembygdsförbund* / Gothenburg Local Heritage Federation. e-mail: exp.gbghembygd@gmail.com. <https://www.hembygd.se/goteborg>

Swedish Building Conservation Association: Ulrika Lindh, Chair.

ACAN Sweden is part of the Architects Climate Action Network, an international network of individuals and organisations in architecture and related built-environment professions. It mobilises action on the climate and ecological crises and promotes a sustainable and resilient built environment.

Tove Sjöberg, Steering Group Sweden. Emma Svanberg and Benoit Marie, Architects.

Europa Nostra Sweden, Europa Nostra country representation: Tina Wik, President, Kersti Berggren Vice-Chair