

PE2018/J: Recognise the value of swimming pools and provide financial relief to help keep pools open

Liz Smith MSP written submission, 7 January 2025

Dear Mr Carlaw and Members of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

Petition PE2018

I am writing in support of Petition PE2018: Recognise the value of swimming pools and provide financial relief to help keep pools open, in my capacity as the Convenor of the Cross-Party Group on Sport.

The Committee will recognise the passion I have for sport and my determination to defend local sporting facilities from closure. As we have seen over the last few years, swimming pools have borne the brunt of tight council budgets and have subsequently been the first to be axed for short term savings. I believe this is short-sighted and is not considering the much longer-term economic and social benefits swimming pools provide.

Swimming pools, alongside other leisure facilities, are vital for physical and mental health and wellbeing. They assist in fostering a sense of community and are widely popular among all age groups and families. Closing pool facilities completely flies in the face of Scottish Government policy on improving health - especially at a time when a third of Scottish adults are obese and there is an ongoing crisis relating to the number of overweight children.

It should concern us all that one in every three UK adults cannot swim which is such a fundamental life skill. While it is welcome that more people are enjoying Scotland's Lochs and waterways, this has inevitably driven a grim increase in cases of drowning. Closing pools will only worsen this trend further if pools are not conveniently available for those wishing to learn.

The evidence the committee will have been provided for the benefits of community swimming pools is compelling. But even aside from the evidence on outcomes, the public overwhelmingly supports these facilities in numerous surveys. They recognise the importance pools have for health, community, and sporting attainment. Every MSP is here to stand up for the interests of their respective communities and on this issue the public has made its view abundantly clear.

I would therefore urge all members of the Committee to support petition PE2018.