

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

Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport written submission, 29 May 2025

Thank you for your letter of 9 May, requesting further information relating to the above petition.

As you will be aware, the Scottish Government believe that swimming pools are essential both in reducing the risk of and preventing drowning, and in providing an important facility to support physical and mental health.

Information is provided below on each of the questions you set out in your letter.

What consideration the Scottish Government has given to establishing a Task Force to explore solutions for keeping swimming pools open, including whether there should be statutory provision that Scottish Swimming and sportscotland are consulted on all proposals for pool closures and replacements.

A significant amount of work has already taken place, and is underway, to better understand the swimming pool estate and support investment in the right places. Scottish Swimming and **sportscotland** have published '*The Future of Swimming Facilities in Scotland*' which is a detailed research study into the condition of Scotland's swimming pools, as well as '*A Sustainable Future: Enhancing Energy Efficiency in Scotland's Swimming Pools*', which details how pool providers can improve energy efficiency in existing pools as well as new models for the next generation of carbon-efficient pools.

sportscotland regularly engages with local authorities and leisure trusts around the sports facilities estate and will continue to work with Scottish Swimming to explore the options that are available to strengthen the role they, and other organisations, can play in the planning for places for sport. Within this, consideration will be given to how best to support and protect swimming pools.

It is vital that key stakeholders work together to find collective solutions to ensure that investment, particularly at a time when public finances are under so much pressure, ensures sustainable facilities, in the right places, to serve local communities' needs.

Whether the Scottish Government will introduce a statutory duty to ensure every child in Scotland has the opportunity to learn to swim.

The Scottish Government believes that every child should be given the opportunity to learn to swim, it is a life skill that can save lives.

Under the provisions of Curriculum for Excellence, education authorities and individual schools themselves are best placed to decide the content of their lessons at the local level, taking into account the local needs and priorities of all pupils in attendance at schools under their management.

There may be specific challenges for schools that do not offer swimming lessons as a part of their physical education classes, such as the distance required to travel to and from swimming pools being difficult to accommodate within the time slots allocated by a school's timetable.

Scottish Swimming's National Primary School Swimming Framework represents a significant step forward in the efforts to improve water safety and swimming education across Scotland. We are committed to continuing to work closely with all relevant organisations, to help ensure that every child in Scotland is given the opportunity to learn to swim.