

# Scottish Government submission of 12 May 2023

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

The Scottish Government places great importance on leisure facilities and believes everyone should have access to these important community hubs. Swimming can provide significant physical, social and mental health benefits and we believe that every child should be given the opportunity to learn to swim, it is a life skill that can save lives.

Energy costs are a significant issue facing swimming pools, largely due to the cost of living crisis and we have repeatedly called on the UK Government to use all the powers at its disposal to tackle this cost of living crisis and to provide appropriate energy bill relief to leisure facilities.

In the most challenging budget settlement since devolution, we are providing nearly £13.5 billion in the Local Government Settlement 2023/24. We are increasing the resources available to Local Government by over £793 million in 2023-24, a real terms increase of £376m or 3%, however, ultimately it is for locally elected representatives to make local decisions on how best to deliver services to their local communities.

We will continue to work in partnership with local government to ensure that the people of Scotland continue to receive the high quality public services that they expect and deserve.

Following the financial package announced by the UK Government to support swimming pools in England, HM Treasury has advised that consequentials will be passed to the Scottish Government. As with any consequentials these will be added to the Scottish block as a whole and Scottish Ministers will decide how best to allocate resources, as part of this process we will consider what support can be provided to the sport and leisure sector in Scotland.

We are currently working with sportscotland to examine the facilities estate in Scotland and sportscotland are supporting Scottish Swimming to deliver a Scottish Swimming Facilities Project. The project will provide

an accurate understanding of the current pool provision, life cycle and predict the landscape in the short, medium and long term. This will likely be the first phase of a multi layered piece of work to fully appreciate the significance and lead into what, how and who will be required to safeguard and ensure future generations will have the opportunity to realise the benefits aquatics has for all.

We will continue to work with sportscotland, local authority partners and others across the sporting sector to understand the challenges facing the sector and any opportunities to provide support.