

Petitioner submission of 30 May 2023

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

Changing Lives Saving Lives

Sport changes lives. It makes people fitter, healthier and socially active. Arguably, swimming is the only sport that directly saves lives.

With Scotland's accidental drowning rate the highest of UK nations, swimming pools are a vital national asset. Leisure trusts host potentially life-saving lessons for over 100,000 children each week. School swimming provides even more.

Every child needs access to a swimming pool now and in the future to create a fairer, more equal and inclusive society.

Pre-pandemic, swimming was Scotland's highest participation sport. It is now the fastest growing. Pools are used by all – from birth to old age and everyone in between. In Scottish Leisure Trust and Local Authority pools alone, adult participation in 2022 generated an estimated £55 million in Social Value – a combined measure of physical and mental health, subjective wellbeing, individual development and social and community development.

Swimming reaches under-represented groups.

Women, who typically do less sport, generate 60% of swimming's Social Value. Women in Sport is a key priority of the Health, Social Care and Sports Committee and pools, through swimming and water-based exercise, can address the gap in female participation.

For people with disabilities, swimming is the highest participation sport, alongside cycling. The weight bearing properties of water means swimming uniquely supports, not only those with disabilities, but those recovering from injury and the inactive.

Thirty per cent of the Social Value of swimming is generated by adults over 65. What is more, swimming can be enjoyed well above this age. This not only supports Scotland's ageing population, but contributes enormously to health savings.

Saving swimming pools is critical. They are lifelines for communities, clubs, individuals and families who rely on them for physical and mental health and general wellbeing. Swimming is more than a sport. It is an opportunity to create a safer, healthier and active Scotland.

Our message is simple. Invest in swimming pools today for a better future tomorrow – to change lives, save lives and ensure Scotland thrives as a nation for generations to come.