

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

Petitioner written submission, 21 January 2026

Scottish Swimming welcomes the Scottish Government Budget Announcement to support school swimming with a multi-year funding commitment and would like to thank the Petitions Committee for the important part they have played in keeping school swimming high on the Government's agenda.

The issue of available, affordable and accessible swimming pools remains a real issue for Scotland and could even impact on the roll out of school swimming if solutions to the facilities crisis are not found. Pools are community hubs which play a major part in health and safety preventative measures for the benefit of the population.

At the start of 2026, seven pools have been in the news threatened with the prospect of closure. These include three school pools in Dundee which were under public consultation at the end of 2025; Jedburgh and Selkirk pools which remain under threat of permanent closure in the Borders; Scalloway pool in Shetland due to close in March 2026 and Port Glasgow pool in Inverclyde which is also part of a council consultation until February 9th 2026.

The situation is only likely to worsen as pools continue to age and increasingly fall into a state of disrepair. 122 of the public pools in Scotland (41%) are already over 38 years old which is the typical lifespan of a pool. The running costs of pools are placing spiralling cost pressures on local council budgets which is in turn causing councils to look at drastic cost saving measures through pool closures.

For these reasons Scottish Swimming is calling for:

- 1) A Task Force on swimming pools to explore investment needs and energy cost savings
- 2) Protection of pools as community assets through consultation on closures with Scottish Swimming and **sportscotland**

By setting up a joint task force between the Scottish Government, **sportscotland**, Scottish Swimming and COSLA we can start to assess and evaluate the risks and support needed to avoid pool closures. We can also plan for the future, establishing how cost savings can be made and how sustainability can be achieved.

A task force can assess and explore:

- ✓ Risks of pool closures at a national and local level
- ✓ Investment needed to sustain pool provision
- ✓ Models to exploit cost savings such as economies of scale on energy
- ✓ Future plans for facility new builds and renovations

- ✓ Carbon-efficient pools and sustainability

To achieve this we need collaboration between Government, **sportscotland**, COSLA and Scottish Swimming to join a task force aimed at supporting pool infrastructure and avoiding pool closures.

With regard to the protection of pools as community assets, our proposed solution is to make **sportscotland** and Scottish Swimming statutory consultees at the earliest possible stage, when swimming pools are facing changes such as closure; relocation or opening. This would be similar to the consultation that schools go through when facing closure under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

By having a statutory consultation process **sportscotland** and Scottish Swimming could:

- ✓ Assess the impact on the local community
- ✓ Consider alternative solutions to closure
- ✓ Overlay age and location of other pools in the area
- ✓ Carry out a mapping exercise of all local pools
- ✓ Ensure greater understanding of the importance of pools

There is significant public demand and interest in swimming and wide public support for keeping pools open evidenced through the opinion poll by JL Partners previously shared. 95% of the Scottish Population think pools are important for safety and 91% think pools closures are bad for local communities. There is also cross party political support as demonstrated at the recent Members Debate in Parliament 6 January and through participation at a Hustings hosted by Scottish Swimming planned for 4 February 2026.

On a positive note it has been fantastic to see the opening of two Passivhaus pools at Blairgowrie and Currie High school using the latest technology and design to create more sustainable, energy-efficient pools which is something we need to learn from for future aspirations.

sportscotland have carried out a Facilities Estate Review of which swimming is part, and we look forward to this being published in due course. We hope that this report will shine a light on the very real crisis facing Scotland's swimming pools and the need for Government action through investment and support to ensure access and availability for current and future generations.