

Chairman and Members of Community  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Please ask for:**

**Direct Line:**

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**Our ref:**

John Mallinson  
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14<sup>th</sup> July 2006

Dear Councillor,

**COMMUNITY O&S COMMITTEE – SPORTS FEASIBILITY STUDY**

I enclose a copy of a letter from City of Carlisle Amateur Swimming Club to be considered as part of the item on the Sports Feasibility Study at next week's meeting.

Whilst writing I also enclose a briefing note which the chairman requested from Allan Dickson on the new legislation in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation This is not being considered at committee but it was thought that the note would provide a helpful background summary for members.

Yours faithfully

**John Mallinson**

Head of Scrutiny and Emergency Planning Services



# **CITY OF CARLISLE**

## **Amateur Swimming Club**

Affiliated to the ASA, NCASA & RLSS



**President**  
**A.G.Grainger JP**

**Hon. Secretary**  
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**Chairman**  
**W.J.Glendinning**

Cllr M W Boaden  
Chairman – Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Carlisle City Council  
Civic Centre  
Carlisle CA3 8QG

9.7.2006

Dear Councillor Boaden,

I understand that the Sports Feasibility Study produced by PMP consultants will be the subject of consideration at the Community Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> July. I wish to make some comments on the report on behalf of our club, pertinent to that report and also to the development of swimming within Carlisle.

To begin with I have to register the concern of our committee that despite being one of the principal users of swimming pool facilities in the city, we were not consulted by PMP regarding our views on any proposals for the provision of swimming within Carlisle. I find this rather strange and indeed in conversation with the other aquatic disciplines that access swimming pools, they appear not to have been consulted either.

In response to the points made in the executive summary regarding swimming I should like to register the following comments;

Point xvii) We would concur with assessment that the facility is adequate, but that it is deteriorating and the fabric requires major investment in the near future. There appears to us to be a distinct unwillingness to invest in the facility beyond that required to keep the facility running.

Point xviii) We concur with the comments regarding access and parking.

Point xix) We believe a dedicated facility built to modern day standards and run appropriately, taking into account the needs of the aquatic disciplines and leisure swimmers, would be sufficient to cater for demand within the City. We currently have few members in our club from the south of the city.

Point xx) The Sands Centre would be an ideal location based on its accessibility by both public and private transport

Point xxi) Based on our own membership we are not convinced of the need for a facility to the south of the city either as a prime location or as an additional facility

Point xxii) Our club continues to support the development of a local facility in Brampton to serve the needs of the locality and the wider area. If the parameter set in paragraph xxxv) "ensure that as many people as possible have access to health and fitness facilities within a ten minute drive-time" is acceptable for general Health and Fitness facilities then it should hold true for the people of Brampton, many of whom will have a much greater drive-time than fifteen minutes to Carlisle.

Point xxiii) See comments as per point xix).

Point xxiv) With regard to the design of a new facility, we are concerned with the lack of vision being taken as regards the development of a new aquatic centre in Carlisle. If the City and County Council truly believe in **"Capitalising on Carlisle's potential to become a major visitor destination"**; providing **"Physical investment and improvements to the urban core to make Carlisle a special place"**; maximising **"the potential of Carlisle as a major destination for leisure.."**; and securing tangible improvements in local health and sport, then we believe they must look beyond simply re-providing existing facilities within a modern setting. We believe a major opportunity to create an aquatic sporting facility that is desperately needed and scarcely provided within the UK, would be lost, if the only option to be discussed was a 25m pool facility. We believe if the City looked beyond its boundaries at the need for a 50m pool facility within the Cumbria, N Lancs, Northumberland, Borders and SW Scotland area, they would find significant demand for such a facility. There are still few areas within the UK that can provide such a facility, and swimmers from Carlisle and Cumbria need to travel as far as Manchester, Glasgow or Stirling in order to access 50m pools. The provision of a suitable 50m facility could be a considerable boon for this area, bringing with it the potential for competitions and revenue income, boosting the profile of Carlisle as a progressive vibrant city. Furthermore the establishment of the University of Cumbria and the "Student Village" within the city would require suitable facilities to service the sports needs of a large population of active 19-24 yr olds. This presumably would be a much larger population than at present, serving to address the current net outflow of students from Cumbria to other areas. The provision of up-to-date sporting facilities would be a significant attraction to potential students to this city.

We believe that there is enough space to build such a facility at the Sands centre and that there are imaginative solutions to fully utilising a 50m pool with booms and a moving floor to satisfy all the various needs of the aquatic disciplines such as competitive and synchronised swimming, water polo and possibly even diving, as well as leisure swimming.

We believe such a facility would service not just the needs of swimmers within Carlisle, but also within Cumbria and its neighbours.

We believe such a facility would be a significant attraction for the City, given the lack of comparable facilities within the immediate locality.

We believe a 50m pool would be endorsed by the Amateur Swimming Association as a significant investment in providing much needed local access to 50m pool time for competitive swimmers in Carlisle, Cumbria and its environs. This would meet the requirements for improved pool facilities leading up to 2012.

We do not believe PMP have given sufficient, if any, consideration to this option.

We believe that in any option appraisal for the re-provision of swimming facilities there should be a costed option for the provision of a 50m pool with leisure pool facilities.

With regard to the development of swimming within Carlisle, I think it important to draw attention to the Executive Summary Point v) bullet point 4 **"there is a relative lack of affluence in the City and District with a lower than average propensity to take part in sport and recreation."**

Competitive swimming, certainly in this locality is rapidly becoming a middle-class elite pursuit. The fees, which our club swimmers pay currently, almost totally cover the pool hire costs. These have risen by 10% recently, to £40.50/hr at The Pools complex, at a "discounted" rate subject to the club achieving Swim21 accreditation. The costs of lifeguard fees are additional to this at another £11/hr. Additional to this are pool hire charges at other community and schools pools which we hire to maximise our water time. All our coaches and teachers are unpaid volunteers. In total this year we expect to pay **over £40,000 in pool hire costs**, yet we are aware of clubs in the North West Region who pay substantially reduced rates, if anything, through support from their local authorities. For our most able swimmers who can only access 11.5 hours per week this equates to £300 per year in fees, and even for our youngest swimmers who access only a couple

of hours a week it still equates to £150 per year. Since swimming tends to run in families, it is not uncommon for families to pay £600 or even more, although we do try to reduce costs for families of 3 or more swimmers. This is a significant investment by a voluntary organisation and one which we believe is not delivering value for money for the facilities we use.

This does not take into account the cost of competition fees, typically ranging from £3.50 to £7.50 per swim, plus accommodation and travel costs at out of county events. Competitive swimmers achieving at a high level compete on a monthly basis, thus incurring significant costs. This relies very heavily on parental financial support. There must be a huge, untapped resource of young people who do not come to us because it is unaffordable. Indeed we are sure that we have recently lost swimmers because of this. This is in stark contrast to other sports within the city where fees are token charges to cover the cost of administration e.g. Carlisle Rugby FC charge a £10 annual membership fee with no training or competition fees for their juniors. One of our coaches has pointed out to us that it would be cheaper for his family to pay for a Local Leisure card and obtain almost unlimited swimming at The Pools complex, than pay more for fewer hours through the club. Again this comes down to priority setting locally and the level of support that our club gets.

If we are truly committed to widening access to swimming and embrace "Sport for All", then there has to be support for organisations like ourselves who can contribute to raising standards and the profile of the sport in particular. This should also contribute towards raising the standard of health and social well-being in the general population.

We believe the swimming clubs of the various disciplines have tried in their own ways and within their own limited resources to raise these standards, but now require investment from others to support and move further forward.

In our own case we have recently gained and retained our position within the Premier Division of the North West Speedo League. We have developed swimmers who have attained National Qualifying Times and are involved in the National Long Term Athlete Development Program. In the past the club has produced swimmers who have achieved at Olympic level, and we have a current swimmer who has achieved world records in her classification. All of this has been done with little or no outside support locally or regionally.

It would be fantastic to see a swimmer from Carlisle compete and achieve in 2012. The reality is that currently this would be down to good fortune rather than good planning. The principle challenge would be to change that culture locally, but this requires a significant investment from all stakeholders, locally, regionally and nationally.

I ask that you consider our comments and concerns in conjunction with the committee's scrutiny of the Sports Facility Feasibility Strategy, and am happy to provide further information or clarification if necessary. Unfortunately I will be unable to attend the committee's July meeting due to annual leave, but I am keen to ensure that the club's needs are considered in any review of swimming pools provision in the city.

Yours sincerely



W J Glendinning - Chairman

cc. Cllr M Mitchelson, Carlisle City Council  
Cllr T Stoddard, Cumbria County Council  
Cllr J R Knapton, Carlisle City Council  
Mr M Beveridge, Head of Culture, Leisure and Sports Services, Carlisle City Council  
Mr E Edge, County Sports Partnership Manager  
Ms K Keohane, Sport England NW Geographical Liaison Officer  
Mr P Martin, NW ASA Regional Development Officer  
Mrs S Glendinning, Chair Carlisle Sports Council