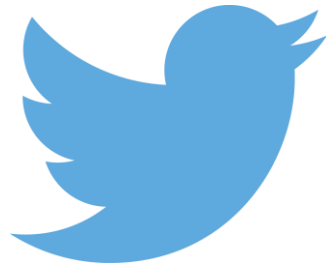




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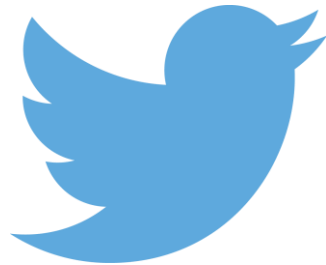
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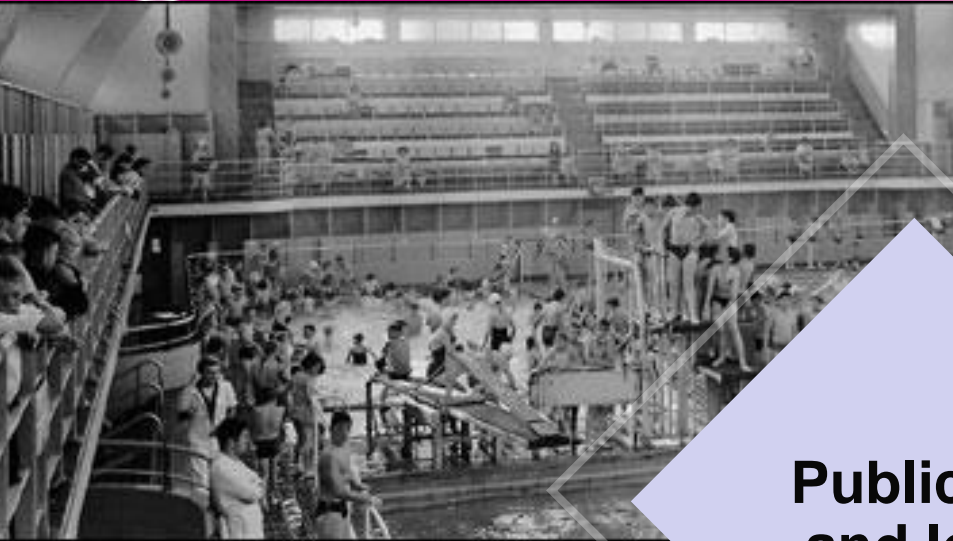


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The Future of Sports and Leisure

**Mo Baines,
APSE Chief Executive**



**Public sport
and leisure
services**

And now....

- Post-covid recovery
- Urgent need for investment
- Decarbonisation
- Energy costs spiralling out of control
- Local authority facilities including swimming pools missed from Energy Relief Scheme Extension
- Was it oversight?

Energy Costs: APSE on behalf of its members

Ms Helen Whitham MP
Prime Minister's Office
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

15th February 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing with an urgent plea for you to think again, and provide the necessary support to the sport, recreation, and physical activity sector during the ongoing energy crisis. The failure to do so will lead to an escalation of service reductions and closures at swimming pools, gyms, leisure centres, community facilities and clubs across the UK, impacting people of all ages and backgrounds.

Sport, recreation, and physical activity is woven into the fabric of our communities, positively impacting the lives of millions of people across the nation. It creates positive experiences, memories, and habits we cherish across our whole lives, and often provides us with sanctuary and resilience in our most challenging of times, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Millions enjoyed and have been inspired by the Lionesses' Euro 2022 triumph and the recent Commonwealth, Olympic and Paralympic Games, which have given us a timely boost in terms of national pride. If we are to continue our successful record in medal winning, then we need to grow the athletes of the future. But our facilities provide much more than just that.

Well maintained, accessible and affordable sporting facilities, parks, playing fields, gyms, pools, and leisure centres contribute to a pride in place, and are the front line of improving our physical, mental, and social wellbeing, which is crucial given the significant pressures facing the NHS and social care.

Furthermore, we know many local schools, sports clubs, and voluntary and community organisations enrich our social fabric by providing a diversity of sports and recreation for many, irrespective of age, ability, or background. This strengthens community and supports social cohesion in an increasingly digital world where many feel disconnected and lonely.

However, the failure to identify bespoke support for the sector (and schools operating sports facilities) as part of the Energy Bills Discount Scheme will be the final straw for many facilities and services – especially swimming pools.

Despite a positive local government settlement, the district and unitary councils responsible for leisure services have little flexibility in their finances to provide the support that is needed by the sector, given rising pressures across statutory services. While the existing relief was welcomed, the end of support in April represents a cliff-edge for these vital but energy-intensive services.

Without national intervention, communities will see the loss of essential local services, including swimming lessons for children which are vital for water safety; multi-sport offerings; mental health services; bespoke programmes for older citizens, ethnically diverse communities, women and girls, and disabled people; and long-term health programmes including cancer rehabilitation and support for those with musculoskeletal conditions and type 2 diabetes. Equally, the loss of accessible sport and leisure facilities will fuel rising obesity rates which the Government has vowed to address. The loss of swimming lessons and rising obesity rates each pose a serious threat to life.

The closure of leisure facilities will also result in the loss of thousands of skilled, professional jobs, and damage to local economies through the impact on suppliers and related businesses.

We are united in our call that the Government works with the sector to:

- Reclassify swimming pools as energy intensive as part of the Energy Bills Discount Scheme so they have access to the higher level of discount on energy prices.
- Set out what tangible support it will provide to the wider sector – including gyms, leisure centres, sports facilities, and clubs – to help navigate the energy crisis across 2023 so that service restrictions and facility closures can be minimised.
- Set out a "plan for growth" for the sector by aligning the proposed new Sports Strategy with the Spring Budget to unlock the potential of the sector to support the economic, health, educational and social wellbeing of the nation.

You have the opportunity to be the first Prime Minister to leverage the role of physical activity for the national good and drive improvements in our national health, reduce the burden on the NHS, and boost economic growth through a happier, healthier workforce. However, the current approach will inevitably result in the managed decline of parts of the grassroots sport, recreation, and physical activity infrastructure in this country, with incredibly damaging consequences for our national health and prosperity.

We implore you to act with urgency to address this.

Yours sincerely,

Probably!

- Announcement of £63 Million additional funding
- To be managed by Sport England mix of Capital and Revenue
- Revenue – urgent support to keep pools open
- Capital – decarbonisation and efficiency measures

Why decarbonisation matters

- In some districts the carbon footprint of the council is derived from ageing leisure facilities
- Up to 45%!
- Wet facilities particularly carbon intensive



- ❑ APSE Survey found 24% of facilities built before the 1970s and close to 50% prior to the 1980s
- ❑ 87% still use gas!
- ❑ Only 10% of stock built from 2010 onwards

Ongoing Impact from COVID-19 APSE Trend analysis on Sports and leisure: 2021-22

Income comparisons...	
20-21 compared to 19-20	21-22 compared to 19-20
72% reduction	20% reduction

Operational recover ratio... average outputs

19-20	20-21	21-22
100%	29%	70%

Subsidy per visit... average outputs

19-20	20-21	21-22
£0.03	£17.69	£1.50

Full report

Securing the future

of public sport and leisure services

A report on behalf of APSE, the LGA and CLOA



- ❑ Collaboration between APSE, CLOA, LGA
- ❑ Swimming pools are essential
- ❑ Local authority provision is unique – we are not trying to replicate the private offering
- ❑ Finances too focussed on cost recovery and not the wider well being contribution to communities
- ❑ Decarbonisation and ageing stock needs at scale investment
- ❑ Public provision can address health inequalities

Articulate the value of public sport and leisure

1. DCMS should establish a programme for public sport and leisure services equivalent to its 'Valuing culture and heritage assets capital: a framework towards informing decision making' programme.

The new programme should make statistics and evidence publicly available to aid the articulation of the value of public sport and leisure services locally and nationally in line with Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) Green Book.

Sustainable investment in public sport and leisure services

2. DCMS and DLUHC should work in partnership with local government to build a robust case for the sustainable investment in public sport and leisure services, to be put forward to HMT for the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021.

It should recognise the wider policy objectives that these services contribute to, and be supported by the new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England in recognition of the critical role public sport and leisure services play in addressing their objectives.

Map the provision of swimming facilities

3. The DfE should work with Government departments and councils to map the provision of swimming facilities and levels of curriculum attainment, investing to address gaps or future gaps in the system and making targeted support available to enable schools to invest in learn to swim and swim safety where the system is currently failing.

Councils consider what social value outcomes they want to achieve

4. Councils should consider what social value outcomes they want to achieve through public sport and leisure services and design services accordingly, including activities such as outreach work to support those who are most vulnerable.

These objectives must also be fully embedded into procurement activity and contract management processes.

Provide professional development opportunities that meet future skills needs

5. Sport England (and other devolved administrations and sports councils), UK Active and Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) should work together, with other key partners, to provide professional development opportunities that meet the future skills needs in a post-COVID-19 world.

This should consider what is needed to tackle inequalities in access, including the implications of digital inequalities.

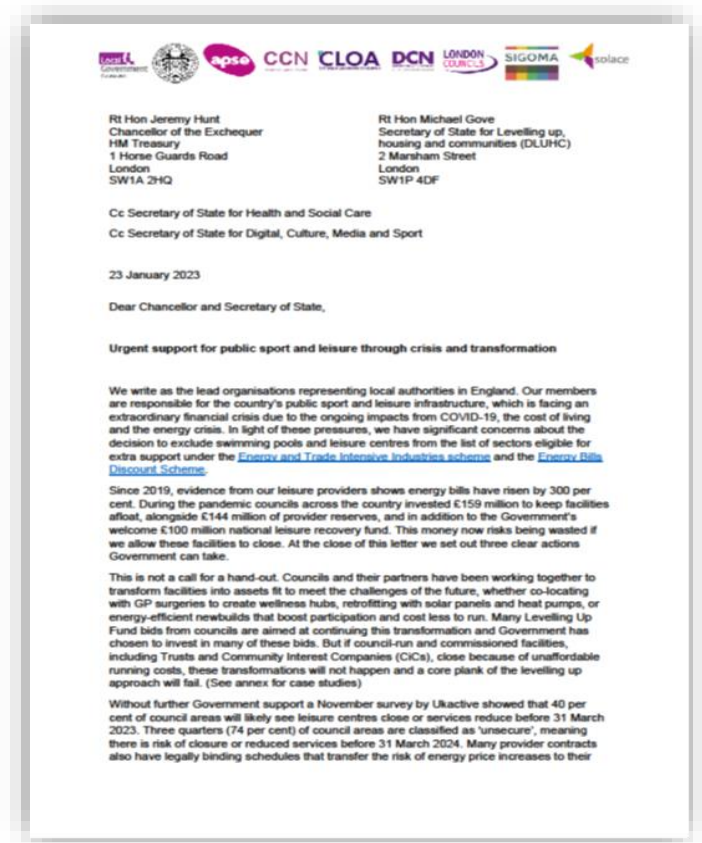
Support elected members and officers to make the linkages with the wider system, including health.

6. Investment should be made available to enable relevant bodies across the UK such as Sport England, the LGA, CLOA and APSE alongside other UK administrative bodies for sport and leisure to provide leadership development for portfolio holders and officers at a strategic and democratic governance level.

A key element of the programme should be supporting elected members and officers to make the linkages with the wider system, including health systems.

Local Government Physical Activity Partnership

7. The Local Government Physical Activity Partnership (LGPAP) should enhance its capacity, increase its visibility and engagement with the Government, and accelerate its work.



Questions for you to think about for the Q&A session!

- Connectivity to Health eco-system essential, but more difficult in 2 tier
- Community Sports development often gone (replaced by a focus on inactive)
- Sport and Leisure facilities of varying standard and ageing.
- Supporting people to be active outdoors (for free) more cost effective than indoor facilities?
- Leisure centre financial model based on generation of significant levels of income, and now hard to move away from. Efficiencies often lost from the system forever.
- Focus on bottom line rather than purpose? Are these services increasingly focusing on those that can afford it?
- Importance of leadership and skills within the Council (irrespective of delivery model). Systems leadership increasingly important.
- Diminishing capacity with COVID response
- Government support for services welcome (e.g. NLRFF), but not enough looking ahead. Uncertain consumer behaviour moving forward.
- Positive feedback on Sport England approach, but focussing on those that are inactive, levelling up. (e.g. Sport England “Uniting the movement”)
- What makes Public sport and leisure services unique?

NEW MUNICIPALISM

Delivering for local people and local economies



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