



Scottish
Swimming

**Saving Lives
Changing Lives**





Swimming is a sport for all and a sport for life and we are passionate about ensuring everyone can swim through:

1. School Swimming

The roll out of the National Primary School Swimming Framework to every local authority in Scotland to give fair and equal opportunities for every child to gain essential swimming and water safety skills and knowledge

2. A task force on swimming

The set up of a task force with the Scottish Government, **sportscotland**, Scottish Swimming and COSLA to assess the need for investment into swimming pools

3. Protection of pools

The introduction of a statutory consultation process with **sportscotland** and Scottish Swimming for every pool under threat of closure to protect pools as community assets

1. School Swimming

Rationale

Scottish Swimming is committed to the vision that everyone can swim. School swimming is a crucial component, giving **every** child the opportunity to experience water in a safe and fun environment. The ability to swim is a critical life skill and can also play an important role in helping people to be healthy throughout their lives, supporting national outcomes for a more active Scotland.

Support

There is significant support for school swimming:

- 98%** of primary school headteachers support school swimming as part of their pupils' curriculum education¹
- 93%** of the Scottish population think all children should learn to swim²
- 91%** of the Scottish population think learning to swim is an important part of every child's education

Issue

While the benefits of being able to swim for safety and wider health are well understood and evidenced, too many children are not provided with the opportunity to learn to swim or experience in water. Primary school swimming is not universally delivered across Scotland and where it is implemented, the quality varies dramatically from one local authority to another. For many children, school swimming will be the only opportunity to gain basic water safety skills and education in a pool environment. Less children are passing the basic aquatic competency test than ever before. This is critically important in Scotland where the drowning rate is the highest of all the Home Nations³.

Solution

Scottish Swimming has developed and piloted a National Primary School Swimming Framework ready for local authorities to adopt and ensure everyone has the chance to swim. The framework offers a consistent approach to deliver basic water safety skills and knowledge to **every** child with flexible delivery models to suit local authority needs.

Benefits

Learning to swim is not only a vital life skill, it has positive physical, cognitive and social impacts on young people. School swimming:

- ✓ Provides life-saving basic swimming skills and water safety knowledge
- ✓ Is accessible so children of all abilities and fitness levels can take part
- ✓ Removes cost barriers and ensures fair access to all children
- ✓ Has a variety of physical and mental health benefits
- ✓ Develops lifelong healthy habits and an active lifestyle into adulthood
- ✓ Provides fun and enjoyment for every child
- ✓ Offers skills and life experience for all, especially those who need it most
- ✓ Opens up opportunities for other water-based activities and sports

What is needed?

For £6 million investment per year, all primary 5 pupils (circa 50,000 children) can be given the opportunity to experience water, to learn basic swimming skills and gain water safety knowledge.

¹ Scottish Swimming Primary School Headteachers' survey with 436 respondents

² 2024 Opinion Poll by JL Partners

³ Annual reports and data | National Water Safety Forum



2. A task force on swimming

Rationale

There are 295 public swimming pools in Scotland of which 122 are 38 years old and nearing the end of their lifespan⁴. Swimming pools are a vital public service for the safety, health and wellbeing of the population. To maintain the current provision of pools in Scotland, combined national and local investment of at least £40.5 million a year is needed to build or renovate existing pool stocks. Scottish Swimming are proposing a joint task force be set up to assess in more detail the national investment need and deliver an action plan to combat pool closures.

Support

A public opinion poll in 2024 by JL Partners showed significant public support for swimming pools. 95% of the Scottish population agree that pools are important for safety and 91% agree that the closure of swimming pools is bad for local communities. Most of the population agree that pools are important for a range of impacts: communities (88%), health (86%) and Scotland's success as a sport (87%).

Issue

We have an ageing stock of pools in Scotland. A report by Swim England estimated the average lifespan of a pool to be 38 years. 41% of Scotland's public swimming pool venues are at this critical age and are therefore at risk of closure. The cost to power Scotland's pools is estimated at £68 million a year⁵. By retrofitting sustainable technologies and with energy efficiencies pools can save around £5 million a year. Unless support and investment is forthcoming many pools will close with adverse knock-on effects to the population's safety, health and wellbeing and an increased burden to the NHS in terms of cost and resource.

Solution

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.

Benefits

A joint 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

What is needed?

Collaboration between Government, **sportscotland**, COSLA and Scottish Swimming to join a task force aimed at supporting pool infrastructure and avoiding pool closures.



⁴ Citizens Participation and Public Petitions Committee 23rd April 2025

⁵ Future-of-Swimming-Facilities-in-Scotland-November-2023.pdf



3. Protection of pools

Rationale

Swimming is a sport for all and a sport for life. It is an activity that can be enjoyed at any age and at any level of ability or fitness. As such, swimming pools should be protected community assets. They benefit all ages and abilities, particularly children who rely on them for safety, as well as the health and wellbeing benefits that the wider population enjoys. The closure of just one pool has huge implications for local communities.

Support

Swimming is in demand as an activity. After going to the gym and weight training, swimming is the most popular participation sport for adults in Scotland with 13% of the population swimming regularly⁶. For women and adults with a disability it is the highest participation sport with 14% and 9% participation respectively. We need to maintain the current level of pool provision to meet this level of demand and expand opportunities in the future such as school swimming.

Issue

Local councils are making decisions to close pools due to high operational costs and squeezed budgets. Often these decisions are made with little consultation or with a lack of understanding about the impact on the community and the long-term implications.

Solution

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.

Benefits

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

What is needed?

A statutory consultation process for every pool closure with involvement from **sportscotland** and Scottish Swimming.

⁶ Scottish Household Survey 2023: SHS Data Explorer

We ask you to:

Acknowledge the contribution swimming makes and can continue to make in improving the health, safety, education and wellbeing of the population.

You can help by committing to:

1. School Swimming

The roll out of school swimming to every local authority in Scotland to give fair and equal opportunities to learn to swim for every child

2. A task force on swimming

The set up of a task force with the Scottish Government, sportscotland, Scottish Swimming and COSLA to assess the need for swimming pools investment

3. Protection of pools

The introduction of a consultation process with sportscotland and Scottish Swimming for every pool closure



**Scottish
Swimming**

scottishswimming.com

Name and Registered Office:

**Scottish Amateur Swimming Association Ltd
(trading as Scottish Swimming)**

**University of Stirling Sport | University of Stirling
Stirling | FK9 4LA**

info@scottishswimming.com