



Scottish
Swimming

Your
#Save~~Our~~Pools

TOOLKIT

Save Your Pools Toolkit

Contents

Introduction



1.0 First Steps



2.0 Building Relationships



3.0 Developing a Campaign Plan



4.0 Writing Letters



5.0 Creating Media Interest



6.0 Meeting Politicians



7.0 Maintaining Momentum



8.0 Conclusion



How to use this Toolkit:

- Work through the toolkit, gathering notes as you go along
- Look closely at the sections your club or organisation currently needs
- Take time to work through the stages and ideas
- Pay special attention to Chapter 3 to develop a campaign action plan

Introduction

Save Your Pools is an evolution of the Save Our Pools campaign designed to keep swimming pools open across Scotland. The campaign started with a parliamentary petition in 2022 (PE2018) to recognise the value of swimming pools and provide financial relief to help keep pools open.

Ultimately, we need your help.

We need the entire aquatics community to keep swimming and swimming pools at the forefront of people's minds. We need to make it hard to close pools, stop school swimming, reduce club and community access, or disproportionately increase costs. You can help us do this.

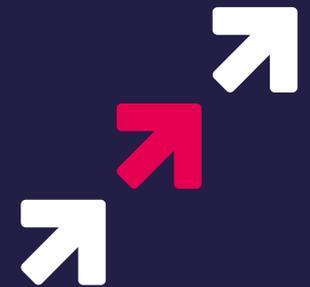
This toolkit is designed to support you with campaigning and lobbying at a local level to keep your community pools open and ensure that potentially life saving activities like school swimming continue in pools the length and breadth of the country.

The toolkit does not provide 'one size fits all' templates, but rather the tools, tips and examples to help you tailor campaigning efforts to meet your particular community needs and lobby locally around issues relevant to you.



1.0

First Steps



1. First Steps

Lobbying is the act of trying to influence government officials, such as politicians to support a specific policy, cause or piece of legislation. It can be carried out by individuals, businesses, clubs and interest groups or charitable organisations through direct communication or by running campaigns.

1.0 Lobbying

This can be done in many ways and it is very important to choose the right method from the start. Contrary to popular belief, lobbying is not always about writing forceful letters or protesting outside offices. Often the most effective way of lobbying is to build relationships with local MSPs and councillors in a positive way to gain support further down the line when it is most needed. Going in hard from the start can be detrimental to a campaign. Chapter 2 is about building those relationships and the remainder of this chapter is about doing research and having discussions within your club or organisation about the best approach. Scottish Swimming can advise and support if there is uncertainty about the best approach to take.

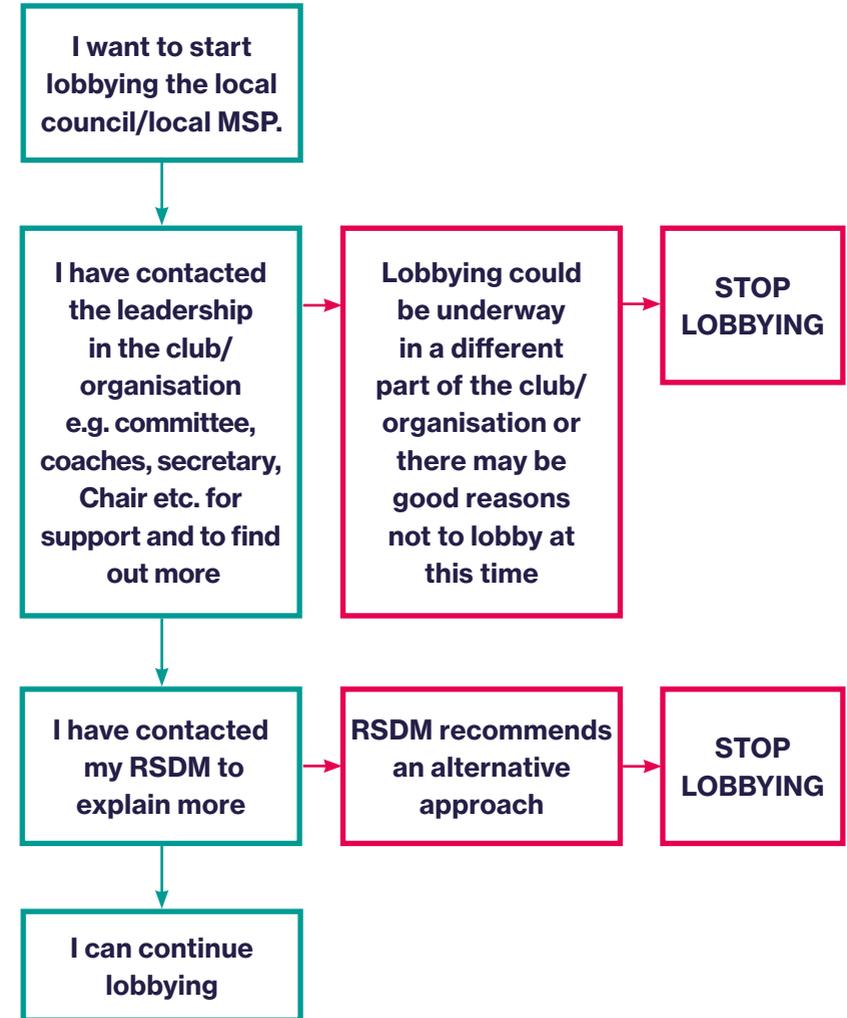
1.1 Doing Your Homework

Before embarking on any campaign activity which involves lobbying politicians, it is vitally important as an individual that you understand what your club or organisation has done to date and who has been involved. For example, swimming clubs have a number of people involved such as coaches, committee members, parents and there may have been letters written previously or responses received that you may not know about.

If you are in any doubt about what lobbying has been done within your club or organisation, your Regional Swimming Development Manager (RSDM) may be able to assist. The Flow Chart in **Figure 1** may help.

For instance, a Committee Member at a local swimming club wants to lobby the council to get a reduction in pool fees and sends a letter to the council. It turns out that the council already agreed a pool fee discount with the Head Coach but the committee member had not realised.

FIGURE 1: To Lobby or Not to Lobby



1. First Steps

1.2 Researching

Once you have taken the steps above and have the support of your RSDM and colleagues it is time to do some research. The type of research you do will very much depend on what you wish to lobby for.

For example, if you are lobbying against pool price rises for your club then it is a good idea to know what a number of other clubs pay. It could be that your rate is actually quite reasonable. If you are lobbying to save your local community pool from closure then do some research on the pool and who uses it.

It could be that you don't have a specific issue facing your club and instead you want to support Scottish Swimming's general lobbying work by writing to your local MSP as a constituent. If you take this generic approach make sure you familiarise yourself with Scottish Swimming's key campaigns and asks. The latest asks are contained within our manifesto document **[Saving Lives Changing Lives](#)**. You can also read about the issues being raised by Scottish Swimming on the **[Parliamentary Petitions website](#)** under Petition PE2018.

Doing research will help you to make a case based on the IMPACT of a decision. The following example is based on a potential pool closure and may help you to ask the right questions to help you with research.

EXAMPLE 1: Potential Pool Closure

How old is the swimming pool?

When was it last refurbished and how much did this cost?

How many children use the pool each week for learning to swim?

How many children use the pool each week for club swimming?

Are there disability swimming sessions? How many users are involved?

Which other groups use the swimming pool (e.g. aqua-aerobics, water polo, etc.)?

What are the benefits of this pool to the local community?

Is the pool in an area of deprivation?

What is the alternative?

How far do people have to travel to the next nearest pool?

Having answers to these questions can really help with letter writing and press releases to show the impact of a pool closure in a local community.

Take action:



- I have contacted my RSDM
- I have talked to others in my club/organisation about the campaign
- I have researched what my club/organisation has done to date





2.0

Building Relationships



2. Building Relationships

Building relationships takes time. It's a continued connection with someone and often requires both give and take. The stronger and more genuine the relationship, the better your influencing can be.

2.0 Understanding who's who

Understanding the local political landscape and starting to build positive relationships with councillors, MSPs and local MPs is critical when embarking on any campaign.

Councils are publicly funded bodies and a list of your local councillors is usually available on council websites along with email addresses. On these council websites you can find minutes of meetings and dates of scheduled meetings. In terms of MSPs, there is a list of MSPs and local constituencies on the [Scottish Parliament website](#). It's also worth noting your MP in the UK Parliament. While matters are often devolved, many MPs are supportive of the campaign which has been profiled at a UK level.

2.1 Get to know the person

Politicians are people just like you and me. Think about the different relationships you have in your life with family, friends, work. Think about your relationship with issues that matter to you, like swimming and politics. The person you are trying to influence has all these relationships too. Think about them within three key themes: human, swimming connection and policy.

Human

Who are they? Start by getting to know them beyond politics. Do your research so you can ask about their family, mention shared interests, or bring up something relatable for example their love of Parkrun or local culture.

Swimming

Many people have a connection with swimming. Either they swim themselves recreationally or perhaps learned to swim as a child and have fond memories of this. Or in contrast perhaps your MSP can not swim and regrets this so is keen to ensure others do not miss out?

Policy

What are they interested in? Did they campaign on a particular issue to get elected, are they part of a cross-party group or committee? Find out what matters to them, as well as their political party's position too. Try to find common ground as a foundation to strengthen your relationship.

2.2 Every Interaction Counts

Think about all the ways you might be able to build your relationship, remembering it's about give and take. Of course, you'll be asking them to support your cause, but you can also meet them at local events, share useful information and thank them when they speak up for issues you care about - remember that manners can go a long way. Every interaction builds trust and familiarity over time. A balanced approach is key to developing strong, effective relationships.

For clubs, swimming lesson providers or other pool user groups this could mean inviting your local councillor or MSP to give out medals or awards at a significant event such as a swimming gala. Or, it could mean inviting them along to a fundraiser or simply to a regular training session to see what goes on in their local area. You could write to them by email and send a note of thanks after the occasion, keeping them updated of other news to keep the communication going.

Remind them about the last time you spoke

Politicians meet a lot of people all the time. Help them to remember you and foster the idea of a lasting relationship by reminding them about your last interaction, for example *"I met you at the conference last year and truly appreciated your support. Now I'm hoping you might be able to help with a local issue I care about."*



2. Building Relationships

2.2 Every Interaction Counts (continued)

Keep trying

Remember, politicians are human. They won't always agree to support a campaign or take an action. Don't take this personally, it could be for lots of different reasons – they might not have time right now, their political party might be against it or they might not be able to do some things if they are a minister, for example. It doesn't necessarily mean your relationship isn't a success, and you can think about these barriers the next time you contact them.

Expect the unexpected

Things can change quickly in politics, it can often be difficult to predict what will happen next week, or the week after. A story in the press, a resignation or reshuffle, can all quickly change the course of a campaign, sometimes for the better and sometimes not. Politics will keep you on your toes, but don't be put off by sudden change, if you act quickly and provide your politicians with information that can help in the moment, it can strengthen your relationship even more.

2.3 Using your contacts

Having done the research at the start of any lobbying campaign, you may become aware of contacts at your organisation who already know councillors, MSPs and MPs. This can be very useful in terms of building those initial relationships and explaining more about the issues facing your particular organisation.

The next section shows how to develop a plan by holding a planning meeting at the beginning to find out if anyone in your club/organisation has contacts already.

2.4 Keeping in Touch

It is important to keep the contact with your councillors and MSPs once established. Rather than sign them up to your club newsletter, write them a personal update of information that might be of interest such as money raised at a fundraiser, the results of a competition or trip, news around new committee members and contacts etc.

If you keep in contact with positive news and updates you are more likely to gain support in the tough times and when you really need support such as facing a pool closure.

Always keep the tone warm and respectful. Even when taking a slightly more forceful stance it is important to be respectful especially when asking for support and advice.

Take Action:



- I have a list of local councillors and the head of the council
- I understand the local political landscape and what parties are represented
- I know who my local MSP and MP are and have their email address
- I know how to access the council website to know when meetings are scheduled





3.0

Developing a Campaign Plan



3. Developing a Campaign Plan

In the case of lobbying around a specific issue, before starting your campaigning, it's a good idea to hold an initial meeting within your organisation/club to communicate information about the issue you are facing e.g. a pool closure.

3.⊙ Holding a Meeting

If your organisation is committee-run, such as a swimming club, invite as many parents as you can to this meeting. This meeting is best done in person but online can work if 'in person' is not possible.

The meeting has three purposes:

- 1) To inform parents about the issue e.g. threatened pool closure
- 2) To ask for support for a campaign
- 3) To recruit people who can help with the campaign

For this meeting to run successfully you need a campaign lead person or persons. This can be the President/Chair of your club or organisation but equally could be someone who has experience of this type of work or is good at project management/coordinating activities. There may be people who are particularly passionate about the cause whose strength could be in a different role such as a spokesperson with media.

There are many different roles and activities involved in campaigning where people may be able to help. Some of these roles and activities are listed opposite. You may find that some of the volunteer parents attending the meeting work for organisations in their day job that could be helpful.

It might also be worth thinking about all user groups affected by an issue and joining forces to give your campaign credibility and additional impact. Alternatively, other clubs and organisations may have lobbied in a different area and taken an approach which you can learn from by sharing best practice.

FIGURE 2: Campaign Roles

Researcher

Gathering facts and information

External Communications

Letter writing to MSPs / MPs/ councillors

Media Liaison

Pitching to media, writing press releases

Photography

Taking photographs of the club/pool/activities

Social Media

Managing social media posts

Internal Communications

Setting up and managing a WhatsApp Group or email groups

Design Skills

Creating eye catching banners, posters, leaflets

Spokesperson

For media, press and interviews

Take action:

- I have set a date, time and venue for a meeting and communicated this
- I have established a campaign lead(s)
- I have explained the campaign and the need for support
- I have kept notes on who will support the campaign



3. Developing a Campaign Plan

3.1 Setting up Communications Channels

Once you have established who will support the campaign, set up a WhatsApp group or email group (or both) which is **separate** from your normal organisation channel communications. It is important to keep the campaign communications separate from usual business such as training schedules, pool times and social activities. Campaigning activity can be busy and reactive (as well as proactive) so having a separate channel is useful.

Give your campaign a name e.g. 'SaveOurPool' or 'Save XXXXXX Pool' so that it is clear what the campaign is about.

3.2 Gather the facts

Going back to the research element, it is important to gather facts and information so that you can show community impact. For a pool closure we established a list of questions you may want to ask in **EXAMPLE 1**. If you are lobbying against an increase in pool fees you may want to understand what other clubs are paying, you may want to understand if other solutions exist, you may want to do some calculations and also understand what parents at your club are willing to pay.

It's important to gather reliable and accurate information. With regard to pool users, often a Leisure Trust will have information in relation to user groups including learn to swim, disability sessions and club sessions. Sometimes individual pools will hold the information about who attends which session and give an idea of rough numbers. It is important to gather as much information as possible to make a strong case.

Regulations around data protection and GDPR may prevent Leisure Trusts and councils giving out some information so be mindful of this when trying to gather the facts. Councils and Trusts do not take decisions lightly and there is often a bigger picture behind some decisions – sometimes this is made clear when the council gives answers to your questions. This does not have to stop a campaign but may affect how you lobby and conduct any campaign.

Think about:



Put yourself in the shoes of the local councillors and MSPs and what issues are important to them. They may, for example, empathise more with angles around water safety, deprivation, health and disability rather than regular club training sessions.



3. Developing a Campaign Plan

3.3 Key Messages

Once you have the facts, come up with some key messages for your campaign. These are a few headlines which are going to grab the attention of decision-makers and the media. You could have as many as five or six key messages or as few as three.

Sometimes you may need more depending on the significance of the issue. In the case of Dundee threatening five pool closures, more key messages were needed. These are shown opposite.

EXAMPLE 2: Key Messages in relation to threatened Dundee Pool Closures

- Pools are costly to build. These pools are nowhere near the end of their lifecycle (as much as 60 years with correct maintenance). Baldragon Academy is only 6 years old and Harris Academy, 8 years old. St Paul's, the oldest of the pools had a significant refurbishment in 2007
- Over 1000 children and adults benefit from using these pools every week for a variety of purposes from vital life-saving swimming lessons to club swimming, disability sessions and recreational public swimming
- More than 800 children a week learn to swim in these pools every week for safety
- St. Paul's RC High School and Grove Academy are already at full occupancy. Accommodating any potential displacement at other pools within Leisure and Culture Dundee's portfolio would be very challenging with current capacities
- Swimming is the highest participation sport in Scotland for children and adults with additional support needs. The pools earmarked for closure host vital lessons and holiday camps for children with additional support needs some of whom attend schools in areas of deprivation (St Andrew's Primary School) and have never experienced a pool before
- 1 in 3 adults in the UK cannot swim. These pools have a thriving adult learn to swim programme with around 70 adults aged 20 to 70 using the pools to learn a vital life skill
- Baldragon Academy is in an area of deprivation and, as part of a successful school swimming pilot with **sportscotland** and school swimming, offered employability for local school children who would otherwise have left school
- 640 athletes, volunteers and coaches in 3 local aquatic clubs rely on these pools every week for fitness, fun and friendship to improve their mental and physical health and wellbeing
- The cost of closure and decommissioning would be significant, not to mention the disruption to schools



3. Developing a Campaign Plan

3.4 Writing to Decision Makers

With your campaign team and communications channels established, facts gathered and key messages created, you are now in a position to start campaigning. This can start with letter writing which we have dedicated the next chapter to. Scottish Swimming have given an example or two of letters but do not provide templates as it is essential that letters are tailored and written from a personal point of view. The next chapter can help you structure your letter in the correct way.

3.5 Making Media Aware

Once you have written to the key decision makers to make them aware of your position and what you are campaigning about, you can choose to engage the local press. There are many ways to do this and timing is important. It could be that you wish to lobby the council or MSPs behind closed doors by building those relationships and try to come to an outcome which benefits your club/organisation.

For instance, perhaps you need to negotiate around pool fees and this is better done through a series of meetings with the council, rather than openly through the press or social media. Alternatively, perhaps a planned price hike is so significant that it warrants being made public because it threatens the club's existence.

Think About:



How can you use the voice of the young people directly affected by the issue at hand. If children are affected by a potential pool closure then involve them in letter writing, meetings and interviews. As long as they are willing and have support of adults, this can be hugely effective.

There is no wrong or right decision – each situation is unique and Scottish Swimming can help steer you in the right direction if a conversation is brought to our attention.

For threatened pool closures, often these are made public in the press at an early stage because of minutes from council meetings made publicly available. If the local press has already communicated the issue there is usually no harm in engaging with the local press to give a statement, quote or response using the key messages you have created.

Using the media is a way to rally support and inform the general public but social media also has its place. There is a section on social media under 5.4 in **Chapter 5**.

The following case study shows what Bellshill Sharks did to save the Sir Matt Busby Sports Complex from closure. It is a good example of developing a campaign plan, enlisting support and following through on actions.

Take action:



- I have a campaign action plan
- I have a team of support to do this
- I have a set of key messages and facts
- I am ready to start campaigning



3. Developing a Campaign Plan

Case Study: Bellshill Sharks

Bellshill Sharks are a community swimming club with around 98 swimmers and 40 non-athletes (volunteers and coaches) who support the club. In October 2023 Bellshill Sharks discovered their local pool, Sir Matt Busby Sports Complex, was going to be closed so they rallied together as a community and mobilised their members to voice their concerns about the pool closure.

Within hours of the news, the club set up a petition with the theme 'Save Our Pool' and set up a brainstorming meeting with all parents and children within the club. It became apparent very quickly that there were a number of parents with skills, contacts and expertise in marketing, media and PR that were willing to support the cause to keep the pool open.

Communications were critical so they set up a dedicated 'closure' email address, and a separate group on WhatsApp so as not to detract from the day to day running of the club and forthcoming galas.

The club made sure the children were involved – after all the closure would affect them the most. They wrote letters to councillors, MSPs and Scottish Swimming, made posters to protest outside the swimming pool building, and prepared for media interviews with broadcasters.

Bellshill Sharks made contact with other users of the facility to extend the reach of the campaign: divers who use the pool, the football team who use the pitches and Taekwon-do who use the sports hall.

They built relationships with MSPs and councillors and reached out to famous celebrities who once swam at the pool or who were from the area. Everyone rallied together as a whole community and they managed to get airtime on the STV news. Thankfully the decision was reversed by the council and the pool was saved for the time being.

Bellshill Sharks celebrated with the most successful gala they have ever had and have enjoyed a huge amount of interest from surrounding communities interested in joining the club. This is a great example of community cohesion – volunteers, families and children coming together to give their club a voice in desperate times to overcome barriers to participation and ultimately keep their pool open.





4.0

Writing
Letters



4. Writing Letters

Writing effective letters that land with impact is a skill which needs attention to detail, strong key messages and accurate information. Letters can be written with slightly different tones but always in a respectful way – after all lobbying is about influencing and swaying decisions, it is not about blame or pointing fingers.

4.1 Writing Effective Letters

At a planning meeting within your organisation, discussed in **chapter 3**, you may have identified someone who has a strong skill set in letter writing. The remainder of this chapter may also be useful when writing letters.

Think about the **PURPOSE** of your letter i.e. what you want, when writing your letter but also think about your **AUDIENCE**, the reader, and what they want. It's a good idea to do a little research on your audience. If it's an MSP, what committees or working groups do they sit on? If you do the research on your audience your letter will connect better and have more influence.

It is very important when lobbying under a joint campaign that letters are all a little bit different and have unique content. One hundred versions of the same letter would only count as one letter and have much less impact. Writing different letters to various people will have much greater impact and can help to emphasise the local angle to a national campaign.

4.1 Letter Basics – Beginnings and Ends

While it might sound obvious, always write to a named person. This is part of the research. If you are writing to the council why not write to the Head of the Council by name. Always put the address or email address of the person you are writing to at the top left of the letter and date the letter. If you are not writing on letterhead (i.e. your address is not shown) then write your name and address top right of the letter so they can clearly see who the letter is from.

If you are copying in another person it is a good idea to write “CC and then the name of the person and where they work so that this is clear.

Write the date underneath the address of the person you are writing to or top right. It's a good idea to save the letter with the date and name of who you write to.

Assuming you have written to a named person, when finishing a letter sign off “Yours sincerely”, place an electronic signature if you can of your name or whoever the letter is from, and type your name and job title/position or organisation underneath.

Think About:



Have you thought about handwritten letters from young people in your club or organisation. This can be highly effective. Alternatively, consider delivering a letter in person from your club.



4. Writing Letters

4.2 Writing to Influence – Letter Structure

1. Demonstrate the crisis or opportunity

What is the problem and why does it need their urgent attention today? For example, 1000 children are missing out on vital life-saving swimming lessons as a result of the ABC pool closure.

And how can they play their part in fixing it right now? We would like your support in carrying out a public consultation around the closure of ABC pool and exploring alternative solutions.

2. Put forward your ask

There's a crisis but what can your reader do about it? Explain exactly what you want them to do after reading the letter. For example, if you are writing to an MSP you may consider asking them about attending your local pool for a visit, raising the issue in Parliament by tabling a parliamentary question, writing to the relevant government department, or supporting a local initiative.

3. Demonstrate the impact they can have

Here is where you can show them the theory of change; if you do this, then that will happen. For example, 91% of the Scottish population agree that pool closures are bad for local communities. Keeping pools open is critical for the safety, health and wellbeing of the population. We need government action and support to make this happen.

4. Tell a story

Bring in personal experiences alongside facts to create the emotion needed to drive action. The research you have done in to your audience as well as your key messages will help you choose the best examples here. Think about what impact the 'crisis' or 'issue' is having on different user groups. If it's a pool closure try not to think about the impact on your club only, think more broadly about learn to swim, disability sessions, other pool users, disadvantaged children etc.

5. Invite the reader into a wider movement

Here is where shared values play their biggest role. Talk about how this campaign, or this action, fits into the bigger picture. For pool closures you could talk about the fact that 56% of our pools are under threat in Scotland based on their age alone. There is overwhelming support for swimming pools among the Scottish population – 95% think they are important for safety and 93% think all children should learn to swim.

6. Repeat your ask

You've used emotions, logic and values to hopefully convince your reader to act, all that's left is reminding them exactly what you want them to do now.

7. Use the voice of young people

Often when it comes to a pool closure or hike in pool fees, those most affected are the young people involved in swimming lessons or club swimming. Involving young people by asking them to write letters (hand written always good) can be an excellent way of creating impact and drawing attention to the issue.

Take action:



- I have read the example letters and know how to structure a letter
- I have a named person to write to
- I have written a letter and checked this with other people in my club or organisation before sending



4. Writing Letters

EXAMPLE 3 – Letter in Relation to Price Increases

30th January 2024

Dear Councillor (insert name),

Price Increases in Falkirk Pools

I write to express deep concern over the proposed price increases for pool hire in Falkirk pools on behalf of affiliated Falkirk aquatics clubs. I understand there are financial pressures and that budgets are squeezed, however a 400% increase in costs next year will have a devastating impact on our clubs and the communities they serve.

Falkirk has four vital community clubs (Grangemouth, Bo'ness, Falkirk Otters, Forth Valley Water Polo Club) and a composite swimming team – FIRST, who all use local pools. They provide a wealth of opportunities for around 400 young people across the area to take part in sport, whether that be for physical and mental health, or to achieve at a local, district, national and international level. In fact FIRST has helped to produce some of Scotland's best athletes including Duncan Scott, Scotland's most successful Commonwealth athlete and most decorated British athlete in a single Olympic Games 2021.

We are deeply concerned by the proposal to increase pool hire costs by more than 400% for the year 2024-2025. We have previously informed council officers and **sportscotland** that the published **sportscotland** figures around average pool hire costs are misleading. They do not account for the size of a pool nor any lifeguarding provision which is not required for club training sessions.

We are also disappointed by the reference to the number of pools in the area. There is no reference made to the pool size or type and it fails to mention whether these pools are accessible to the public and clubs.

The proposals seem to take a blanket approach to assessing pool hire charges based on flawed figures. The price hikes will have a huge impact on the community clubs and their 382 members for whom sport is a way of life that keeps them mentally and physical healthy. The clubs have worked hard on calculations but the only action for some will be to fold or pass on price increases which would mean a mass of young people dropping out of the sport and swimming becoming the preserve of the privileged.

Our vision is 'everyone can swim'. Swimming pools need to be available, affordable and accessible for all, not least for the biggest user – community clubs. I fear for the impact on children's health. We saw the catastrophic impact that a lack of sport had on young people's health and wellbeing during Covid and once again many children (often the most vulnerable) will be forced to drop out of the sport because it is simply unaffordable.

As the governing body for aquatics in Scotland we would urge the council to review these proposals and consider a phased price increase as an alternative over 3 to 5 years. This would allow these local, community clubs to remain sustainable and support the athletes, families, coaches and volunteers who rely on their sport for health and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

CEO, Scottish Swimming



4. Writing Letters

EXAMPLE 4 – Letter in Relation to Pool Closure

30th January 2024

Dear Councillor (insert name),

Closure of Loch Centre swimming pool

I am writing on behalf of Scottish Swimming to express our concern and dismay at seeing the devastating news that the Loch Centre pool is under threat of closure as a result of financial constraints.

We understand there are economic pressures as a result of squeezed council budgets, however swimming pools are often the beating heart of local communities bringing people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds together for fitness, fun and friendship and safeguarding the mental and physical health of the population.

Swimming reaches all abilities and ages and has always ranked as one of the highest participation sports in Scotland. The unique weight-bearing properties of water and the low-impact nature of our sport means it is accessible to all and can be a lifeline for the elderly and those with serious health conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

The Loch Centre is a vital community asset, hosting swimming lessons for over 300 children including those with additional support needs from Ross High School. The centre is also used by some 150 club swimmers at Tranent ASC and East Lothian Swim Team and the general public who use it regularly throughout the day for physical exercise and social interaction.

I understand that enjoyleisure have been very supportive in moving learn to swim lessons and finding alternative pools for club sessions but a full closure of the pool would have devastating consequences for the community. The pools at Musselburgh and Haddington are much further away and this means that swimming has halted for some children, especially those without transport or those unable to make the new lesson times in these pools.

We understand that the Aubigny Centre is due to be expanded and it would be good to know more about future plans for pools in the area given the demand outlined above.

94% of Scots think swimming pools are important for safety according to a February omnibus poll by JL Partners and 90% of people in Scotland think pool closures are bad for communities.

As governing body for 150 community clubs across Scotland and a partner of enjoyleisure we are keen to understand more about this critical issue and to see what can be done to accelerate any expansion plans for pools in the area. Swimming pools are vital for the nation's health and well-being, the safety of young people learning to swim, and for us – a lifeline for our members and volunteers.

I would be happy to discuss this with you in more detail.

Yours sincerely

CEO, Scottish Swimming





5.0

Creating
Media
Interest



5. Creating Media Interest

Creating media interest is about telling a story. The media want to know about the issues and opportunities facing communities and affecting people's lives. It is your job to tell that story so that the media take an interest.

5.0 Creating a Story

Getting busy journalists and reporters to pay attention to your story can be a daunting task especially if you feel you do not have much to say. By doing the majority of the work for the media, you are much more likely to get your press release published but first you need to find your story. Remember you may just want to raise the profile of your club not just use the media for lobbying. Some examples of stories are given below.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Did an elite swimmer train at your club?
- Do you have a rising star in the club you want to profile?
- Has your club overcome a difficulty or challenging situation?
- How has your club impacted on volunteers' lives in a positive way?
- Could other people relate to the story you'd like to share?
- Does your story evoke any emotion?
- Could your story inspire other people to take up swimming?

Once you have your story you can create a news article for your website, newsletter and a press release that you can send out to all media.

5.1 How to write a Media Call

A Media Call is a short alert that goes out to media to inform them of an event. It is just the bare minimum in terms of content and facts so you should clearly state:

- What your event is about – any special venues or guests attending?
- Why the event taking place
- Where the event is happening including full address and postcode
- When is the event including a date and time?
- What is the detail? e.g. what time is the photo opportunity with a star?
- What time are guests available for interviews?
- How do you want the media to react? Do you want them to come? Do you want them to publicise the event or is it a closed event and under embargo? (i.e. they cannot publish it until a certain time) There is an example of a Media Call in **EXAMPLE 5**.



5. Creating Media Interest

EXAMPLE 5 — Media Call

Media Calls can be sent to your local press contacts at the radio, local TV, local newspapers or even bigger national papers if the event is important enough.

Date: Sunday 23rd February 2025

Time: 8.30am - 9.30am

Venue: Room ALSH 1, SEC, Glasgow, Scottish Labour Party Conference

Subject: The Importance of Swimming Pools and School Swimming

Refreshments: Teas, coffees, pastries and bacon rolls served

Scottish Labour recently pledged to support free school swimming lessons citing swimming as a vital life skill and every child should get the chance to swim. Scottish Swimming will be hosting a breakfast fringe event at this weekend's Labour Party Conference, where Triple Olympian and World Champion Hannah Miley discusses school swimming and the ongoing support needed for swimming pools, alongside Neil Bibby MSP, John Lunn CEO of Scottish Swimming and Sophie McCall, Director of Aquatics Development at Scottish Swimming.

To attend the event please RSVP to h.frost@scottishswimming.com by 12pm on Friday 21 February.

5.2 How to Write a Press Release

It is a good idea to submit a press release on the day of your event or simply to break a story. Getting the media to notice, read and publish your press release is the challenge as journalists receive multiple press releases every day. Follow our simple steps below, 'the 6 I's' – Impress, Inform, Include, Insert, Incorporate and Images. Use double spacing for your press release so it is easy to read and stick to 2 pages maximum.

1. IMPRESS with the title. Ensure your title grabs attention from the start. Compare the following two titles. Which one is more appealing?

“New National Framework for Swimming launched by Scottish Swimming in Aberdeen on 6th September with Olympian Duncan Scott” or

“Double Olympic Silver Medallist Duncan Scott launches new Learn to Swim Framework in Aberdeen on 6th September”

2. INFORM In the first sentence mention the Who, What, Where, When and Why of your story so that a journalist can understand what the story is about straight away, e.g.

“On 6th September double Olympic silver medallist Duncan Scott launched Scottish Swimming’s new National Framework for Swimming in Scotland at Aberdeen Sports Village Aquatics Centre.”

3. INCLUDE facts and figures give your story credibility and importance. Consider some of the following figures used in the example above.

“The National Learn to Swim Framework in partnership with Scottish Water, delivered by 38 Learn to Swim providers across Scotland, now operates in 165 pools and has reached 210,000 children since its inception in 2015.”



5. Creating Media Interest

5.2 How to Write a Press Release (continued)

4. INSERT a quote. Ask someone relevant or as senior as possible for a quote to include in your press release. It's a good idea to insert this and then share this with the person you are quoting for final approval. You may want to consider approaching other relevant people who would help to give the story more prominence. Could you approach Scottish Swimming for example at marketing@scottishswimming.com

5. INCORPORATE Editor's Notes. At the end of your press release write End and then add 'Editor's Notes' followed by a 'boilerplate' – a short paragraph about your club or other relevant information. You also need to include your contact details – telephone and email address.

Example: Editor's Notes About Scottish Swimming

Scottish Swimming is the national governing body for aquatics in Scotland. Scottish Swimming represents clubs, swim schools, aquatic sports, athletes, coaches and thousands of talented and committed volunteers across the entire swimmer pathway. We are focused on delivering in the following key areas to reach our vision to ensure that everyone can swim: More Swimmers, Stronger Clubs, Supporting Athletes and Active Communities.

For more information visit www.scottishswimming.com For further information on this press release please contact Helen Frost on 07702 872964 or h.frost@scottishswimming.com

5. IMAGES Make sure you have a photographer who can supply high quality, free to use images to the media. It can make a real difference to getting your story published. Remember to check your spelling and grammar and bring printed copies to your event. If the press release needs to have an embargo (i.e. it cannot be released before a certain time) then write this at the top. 'UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 6TH SEPTEMBER AT 11.00AM.

A full example of a press release is given in **EXAMPLE 6**.

EXAMPLE 6 — Press Release

Media release ... Media release ... Media release Leisure provider makes waves with national award win Community-first approach earns top spot for swim programme success

AN EAST RENFREWSHIRE leisure provider has won a national award showcasing its exceptional dedication to developing and delivering its Learn to Swim programme for young people and adults.

East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure took home the coveted title of Scottish Water Learn to Swim Provider of the Year at the Scottish Swimming Annual Awards.

The leisure provider, which delivers swimming lessons to more than 3,950 swimmers every week, was recognised for its outstanding commitment to delivering a quality programme and creating an inclusive, supportive and community-focused environment where every child can gain confidence in the water.

Judges were particularly impressed by East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure's tailored approach, which includes targeted support for pupils requiring additional assistance, specialised sessions for young people with additional support needs, and dedicated female only classes that promote cultural inclusion and body confidence.

The award celebrates leisure providers, local authorities and aquatic providers who are delivering the Learn to Swim National Framework across Scotland - a partnership between Scottish Water and Scottish Swimming- with the vision to create 'Generation Swim', a generation of confident, safer and competent swimmers, who will also get to experience the wider health and social benefits that swimming can offer.

East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure's win marks a significant achievement in its continued mission to offer a Learn to Swim programme that works for all ages and abilities and in particular for families in the region, from toddlers taking their first strokes to teens seeking to build lifelong skills.

Karen Baxter Swimming Development Manager at East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure, said: "Winning this award is an incredible reflection of the effort our team puts in every single day to support our swimmers and their families.

"We pride ourselves on being adaptable and inclusive, making sure every child, no matter their background or ability, has the chance to thrive in the water while ensuring they feel safe and confident.

"We're also committed to creating a strong and supported workforce, which we believe is key to delivering a consistent, high-quality experience across all our lessons."

East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure's approach includes a highly effective intervention system designed to support learners who may be progressing more slowly through the programme. Staff identify pupils who are taking longer than usual to advance a level and implement personalised action plans, a move that has contributed to improved satisfaction and higher retention rates.



5. Creating Media Interest

EXAMPLE 6 — Press Release (continued)

As well as creating a safe and welcoming environment for young swimmers, the organisation has built a robust staff development pipeline. It offers the Scottish Swimming Teacher Qualification (SSTQ) as a vocational choice in secondary schools and partners new recruits with experienced mentors, with all training costs covered by the body.

John Lunn, Chief Executive Officer at Scottish Swimming, said: “We were incredibly impressed by the standard of entries this year, but East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure stood out for its forward-thinking, inclusive and community-led approach.

“Its team goes above and beyond to ensure every swimmer is given the best chance to succeed, and the results speak for themselves. It is an outstanding example of what the Learn to Swim programme represents.”

Now in its eighth year, the Learn to Swim Provider of the Year Award recognises organisations making a real impact in their communities by delivering high-quality lessons that help children and adults develop a vital life skill.

The winner will receive an exclusive poolside visit from the Learn to Swim Framework ambassadors - Olympic, World & Commonwealth Champion Duncan Scott and Paralympian and World Champion Toni Shaw.

At last year's awards, Sport Aberdeen took home the same honour, while this year's shortlist also included Active Stirling and Edinburgh Leisure – all showcasing the powerful impact of local providers across the country.

Learn to Swim is a National Framework creating inclusive environments where individuals of all ages and abilities can learn to swim. It develops confident, competent swimmers while promoting healthy, active lifestyles. Around 84,000 children and adults participate in lessons weekly across Scotland.

Safety in and around water is central to the Framework. Swimming provides essential life skills to help people stay safer whether at local pools, beaches, or around Scotland's coastline, rivers, reservoirs and lochs.

For more on the Learn to Swim programme, visit: <https://www.scottishswimming.com/learn-to-swim>

ENDS

Issued on behalf of Learn to Swim by Holyrood PR.

For further information, contact info@holyroodpr.co.uk or 0131 561 2244.

About Scottish Swimming

Scottish Swimming is the national governing body for swimming and aquatics in Scotland. Scottish Swimming represents our clubs, swim schools, aquatic disciplines, athletes, teachers and thousands of talented and committed volunteers across the entire swimmer pathway. We are focused on delivering in the following key areas to reach our vision to ensure that everyone can swim:

More Swimmers; Stronger Clubs; Supporting Athletes; Active Communities
Further info at www.scottishswimming.com

5.3 Sharing your Press Release

Now that you have created your press release, you need to decide when, where and how should you send it. If your press release is for an event and you wish press to turn up then generally holding your event in the morning is better. Midweek, Tuesday or Wednesday is always a good day to secure the press whereas Mondays and Fridays are busier. If you are sending it to local press find out when the deadlines are. Sending something the day before deadline or even specifying which date you would like it published can also work well.

Sending the press release as an attachment and in the body text of the email is the quickest and easiest way to send it and you can attach images as well this way. Address it to multiple journalists by using the Blind Copy (BCC) function in email.

Make sure the subject of your email is also attention grabbing and relevant to the story. In terms of where to send it try to think laterally on this one. It does not just have to be the local newspaper. How about sharing it with Scottish Swimming, **sportscotland**, the local council, the local radio station, local TV, Aquatics GB, your local university or even a lifestyle magazine. You never know who will pick up the story and the broader your reach the more likely it will be published. Place it on your website as a news story and have a social media post pointing to the news piece.



5. Creating Media Interest

5.4 Social Media

Social media can be a quick way to communicate a message and rally support especially when time is short. Before doing any activity on social media channels it is important to understand who the fans and followers are on your channel. If they are supportive of your organisation or club then putting out posts on social media can be an effective way of enlisting supportive comments. The pitfalls of social media are that it can lack the control that other mediums have and some comments may not be helpful.

Social media is often used as a signpost to more information – perhaps you want people to sign a petition, vote on an issue, read a news article or download information from your website. Having a specific action for people to undertake is a good way to use social media and it can also be useful when trying to measure the success or reach of a campaign through for example, number of comments, shares, clicks or likes.

5.5 How to do Interviews

Interviews can sometimes be requested either on the back of a press release or as part of a separate story the media has run. Before this happens identify who in your organisation or club could be a good spokesperson. This is someone who can speak passionately about your club/organisation and convey your key messages in a clear and concise way. Experience of interviews is an asset but is not essential.

For press, often the interview can be done over the phone or on a video call. Sometimes for radio interviews are delivered over WhatsApp voice record. For broadcast and TV always ask if the interview is live or a pre-record – asking for the latter can be helpful in gathering your thoughts and setting out your key messages better than in a live interview.

Remember there is no such thing as ‘off the record’ conversations with journalists. Everything you say could be used in print or broadcast so it’s best to stick to your key messages and practise these so they sound fluent and natural.



When giving your answers try to pause occasionally. This allows radio and TV broadcast to take soundbites from you rather than a long answer and this can sometimes be more impactful.

For TV if you can wear club kit to get that all important branding in the shot. Stand with your feet slightly apart and hands by your side in a relaxed stance. Usually you look at the person interviewing you rather than the camera.

Stick to the key messages and be careful not to be dragged into a question or debate that you do not want to go down. Allow yourself time to think – some useful phrases to use to steer the conversation back to your key messages can be:

“That’s a very good question so let me talk about....”

“The real issue here is....”

“The important issue here is.....”

If you are concerned about interviews Scottish Swimming can offer advice in relation to this.

Think about selecting young people for interviews and preparing them with some practice – this can be extremely effective especially on TV news where adults and children can both put their cases forward.

Take action:



- I have researched and have a list of media contacts
- I know how to construct a press release and have a first draft
- I know who the spokespersons are for interviews and have shared the press release with them
- I am ready to send the press release



6.0

Meeting Politicians



6. Meeting Politicians

Meeting with politicians and councillors is a great way of building relationships and keeping in contact with your MSP as well as asking for support with specific issues.

6.⊙ Getting a meeting

Find their contact details

You can search for your MSP by their name, by your postcode or constituency on the [Scottish Parliament website](#). You can also find MPs on the [UK Parliament website](#). When you click into the MSP/MP, you'll be able to see their political party, any roles they have in Parliament, and how long they have been an MSP for. You can also see how they like to be contacted, which is important to make the best first impression. A little further down the page, you'll find all the ways you can contact them.

Get in touch

Depending on the contact details you find, you can either email or call to ask for a meeting. If you speak to someone on the phone, it can be helpful to ask for the diary secretary. It's essential that you state that you are a constituent and explain clearly why you want to meet. Politicians' diaries are always very busy so be flexible about the day and time of your meeting if you can.

Let us know

Make sure you let us know as soon as you've got a date in the diary to meet so we can share any useful information we might have to help you prepare.

6.1 Preparing for a meeting

Have a clear purpose

Whether you are meeting for the first time to introduce yourself, or with a particular campaign ask, make sure the purpose of your meeting is clear. This will help you decide what you want to say and make it memorable.

Do your research

The more you know about the person you're meeting, the better you can prepare with the necessary facts, statistics and stories.

You'll often be able to find out about your politician on their Parliamentary page, including their voting record and policy areas they have spoken on or have a role in. You can also find out more on [TheyWorkForYou](#) and their personal webpages, if they have them.

Practise

You can prepare for your meeting by talking to yourself in a mirror, asking family or friends to help, or speaking to the Campaigns team. Practising with someone else can help you feel confident in what you want to say and prepare for possible questions that might come up too.

Think About:



When Falkirk pools were under threat, children joined the council meeting to put forward their view. It was an extremely powerful way of getting the message across but it needs to be practised and rehearsed.



6. Meeting Politicians

6.2 Meet

Be on time and keep it professional

Make sure you know where the meeting is going to take place and check the route to arrive on time. Remember your body language is as important as your words.

You won't always agree with the politics of the person you're meeting but it's important to be professional, polite and focus on the purpose of the meeting. If you're not sure about an answer during your meeting, let them know that you'll follow up and get back to them.

Let us know

After your meeting, let us know how it went so we can update our records and help you follow up too.

Take action:



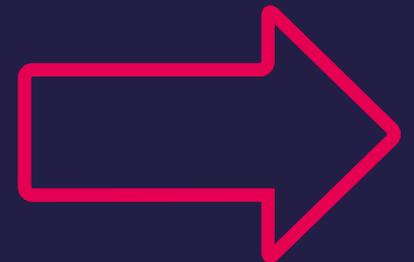
- I know how to contact my MSP or councillor
- I have conducted some research on the person
- I have emailed them to ask for a meeting to discuss a specific topic
- I have prepared for the meeting
- I have met them and provided a debrief to colleagues and/or Scottish Swimming





7.0

Maintaining
Momentum



7. Maintaining Momentum

One of the most difficult elements of campaigning is keeping going. Sometimes it may feel that despite one's efforts, not much is happening or the campaign is falling on deaf ears. This may not be the case. Politicians are busy people so it is best to keep in touch and keep reminding them of the campaign.

7.1 Focus on Supporters

Keep your supporters on board by keeping them abreast of updates and information. If you have a new event coming up, a report coming out, some excellent competition results or a change in staff or volunteers – keep your local MSP and councillors informed so they feel valued.

7.2 Have a Plan

Having some sort of communications plan over the course of the year provides a focus and gives some key milestones which can act as hooks for media activity or letter writing. If you are in a club then keeping your club informed of what is going on is also critical so that people know the campaign is continuing and know how to support it.

It could be that you need to change strategy from national lobbying to support Scottish Swimming to a more localised campaign to save your local pool from closure. Or, it could be that you need to step up your campaign activity to be more forceful in reaction to decisions being made in your local area.

7.3 Try a Different Approach

Be adaptable and flexible with how you do things. If letter writing is not having the desired impact or effect then perhaps it is time to involve the media and rally their support. It's importance to be patient as big decisions take time but sometimes it is good to put a little more pressure on decision makers especially when stakes are high.

7.4 Maintaining relationships

Although a more forceful approach can sometimes have impact, it is very important not to make campaigns personal and also it is important to keep the door open when it comes to relationships even when you disagree with how things are being handled.

7.5 Handling Different Outcomes

As we mentioned right at the beginning of this toolkit, lobbying is about influencing and swaying decisions. Sometimes these go in our favour and sometimes they do not despite efforts to lobby.

Try not to be disheartened if the outcome is not what you wanted. Doing something is better than doing nothing and there may be positive outcomes from the work you have done – new skills developed, new relationships formed, a closer, tight-knit community club perhaps? Try to think of the positives when things do not go to plan and share this within your club.

If things do go your way, remember to thank people for their support and efforts. Keeping these relationships is important as you may need them again in the future.

Think About:



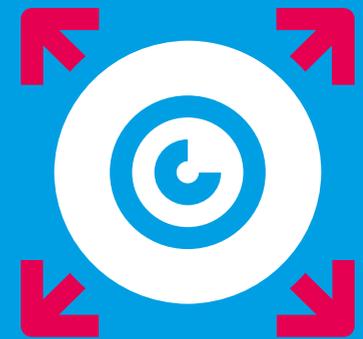
**What can you do differently to have more impact?
Have you involved the voice of your young people in the club? Do you need to change who you are writing to?
Do you need to involve the media more? Scottish Swimming is here to support.**





8.0

Conclusion



8. Conclusion

We hope this toolkit is useful and gives some pointers in how to lobby effectively. The road can be long and big decisions, particularly around investment, can take a huge amount of time in politics. Be patient and persistent. Build trust and relationships, maintain the momentum and keep doing the research to keep your campaign relatable and relevant as things can change quickly especially during elections.

Thank you for your support and help in keeping swimming and swimming pools at the forefront of hearts and minds.

Further Support:



For further advice and support please email
Scottish Swimming at marketing@scottishswimming.com
or contact Helen Frost h.frost@scottishswimming.com.



www.scottishswimming.com

[Scottish Swimming](#)
[Save Your Pools](#)



scottishswimming.com



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