From Policy to Pool
An ASA policy document on swimming pools in England
Introduction

The Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) sees excellent pool design and construction as vital to the continued public interest in swimming and its related aquatic activities. The modern customer has many alternatives available. As the national governing body of swimming, it is therefore incumbent on the ASA to make every customer’s experience as positive as possible and those swimming experiences are much more likely to be achieved through the creation of pleasant and well thought out surroundings. ‘From Policy to Pool’ seeks to become a catalyst for change and encourages everyone involved to think more widely when planning, designing, building and operating swimming facilities.

The ASA’s vision for swimming pools is a network of accessible and affordable pools which have no barriers to participation and which offer the opportunity for wide participation and maximise the opportunities to develop talent and service elite aquatics. We want to encourage creative approaches to pools.
The structure of this document

This document is designed to create an interface between the ASA and many of the bodies with which it works. It identifies national policies and then sets out what the ASA can do to meet these policies. In doing so, it explains why and what type of pools we need as the key vehicle to deliver on these policies.

The document is split into 4 sections- the first section deals with the overall position of swimming pools in England; the second section is set out in the main themes that currently impact on swimming; the third section looks at the planning of water space; and the final section sets out how the ASA sees the network of pools.

In order to avoid repetition, throughout this document, all aquatic disciplines including swimming, diving, water polo, open water and synchronised swimming will all be referred to by the term swimming.

The purpose of this policy document

This policy document builds on our first facility strategy, ‘From Armbands to Gold Medals’ and establishes our vision for swimming pools over the years between 2009 and 2013. It envisages the future swimming experience and challenges pool designers and project managers to develop concepts and deliver outcomes that will entice people to swim.

The document does not set out to establish guidelines for pool design. Sport England’s ‘Swimming Pool’s-Design Guidance Note, 2008’, or important framing documents such as the Federation Internationale De Natation’s Handbook 2009 - 2013, the Health and Safety Executive’s ‘Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools’ (HSG179) or the EC through ‘the European Committee for Standardisation’s -prEN 13451 parts 1-11 BSEN 15288 Part 1’ which covers safety standards in design. Although from time to time, we mention the relationship between design and operations, we avoid detailed comment on design issues and how to implement them. Information on planning, designing and operating swimming pools is available from the ASA Facilities Department (the address to be found at the end of this document).

This document has a wider policy dimension and sets an agenda for the future which takes into account the current thinking by many agencies including government departments, politicians and those responsible for delivery. It seeks to integrate the required features of design with those of the needs of people who will be using pools. We want to encourage the sound planning for the location of pools and the impact of this on the importance of learning to swim, participation and talent pathways.

Our strategic intent, therefore, is to:

- create a clear agenda for swimming pool planning, design, construction and operation.
- signpost the ASA’s policies for swimmers, swimming and swimming pools. Within this tripartite framework, we see swimming pools as the delivery vehicle.
- knit together all strategies which impact on pools.
- encourage adequate and suitable provision to achieve the ASA’s Strategic Objectives (see ASA Strategy 2009-2013).

These will help us to continue to fulfil the ASA’s long held objectives (A Vision for Swimming (2009-2013) to:

- ensure everyone has the opportunity to learn to swim.
- offer everyone the opportunity to enjoy swimming, or water based fitness activities for health and fun, throughout their lifetime.
- ensure everyone achieves their different personal goals throughout their lifetime.
- ensure the nation achieves gold medal success on the world stage.
Position of swimming pools in England

The economic and political environment

Economic
Since the third quarter of 2008, England has been in recession. It is predicted that heavy Government borrowing will not significantly reduce until 2012 and beyond. This inevitably impacts on any decisions on the building and refurbishment of pools. The ASA’s task is to encourage every local authority to continue to make provision for swimming and to ensure that there are adequate facilities for their own communities.

Political
There has been considerable concern about the planning of facilities. In its 2006 Report, Public Sports and Recreation Services, The National Audit Office said: ‘Our research has concluded that progress towards ensuring the appropriate management of public sector sports and recreation facilities has been slow and uncertain. Buildings are ageing and they frequently fail to meet changing needs and customer expectations’.

‘The strategic planning of local sport and recreation services is underdeveloped with little robust assessment of current private and public leisure provision, community needs and future demand. Performance management is weak, and this restricts the ability of councils to assess the impact of services on local and national priorities’. This policy document is designed to guide stakeholders in dealing with some of these concerns.

Policy framework
The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 led to Regional Planning Guidance being replaced by Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). RSS (which are expressed as Planning Policy Statement 11) is now part of the statutory Development Plan for regions outside London. These strategies incorporate a Regional Development Plan and are the basis of a broader development strategy for each region for a 15 to 20 year period. They will establish the Government’s planning and transport policy for each region and will provide frameworks for determining planning applications, local development documents and local transport plans.

The RSS’s will consider the scale and distribution of new housing and employment, priorities for the environment, how waste will be dealt with and key infrastructure to support development. This infrastructure will impact on pool building. Beneath the Regional Spatial Strategies sit Regional Thematic, Housing and Cultural Strategies which determine the amount of land that needs to be allocated to each specific objective and beneath these strategies, Community Strategies, Local Development Frameworks (Planning Policy Statement 12) and other local strategies.

Planning, Local Development Framework Monitoring: A Good Practice Guide (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005) sets out the need for spatial monitoring. It highlights the necessity for wider social, environmental and economic objectives and the monitoring of outputs. It also encourages ‘new forms of partnership with a range of bodies including communities and specific stakeholders’. When considering swimming pools, it seeks more evidence based policy and decision making and therefore helps to frame our thinking in this document (see Sport England Facility Planning).

The current position in England
In ‘Shaping places through sport’, Sport England makes a strong case for the benefits of sport and helps to make the case for local authorities to build facilities. Swimming has a part to play in generating these public benefits. The business of building and operating swimming pools is a mature market and we are now seeing increasing diversification and complexity in this market place. The rapidly changing landscape in pool provision is bringing about new approaches to swimming. Within this landscape, the ASA observes a large increase in the number of hotels with pools, many private clubs that are building pools and the recognition by universities that a new pool can be an attraction to potential new students as well as a source of enjoyment to those already studying. Public pools, however, are essential to both the ASA and the general public and will continue to be the main distribution channel for swimming.

On the downside, the ASA Facilities Department estimates that the total number of school pools has decreased by about 50% since the late 1990’s. Many school pools that were built in the 1960’s and 1970’s are reaching the end of their natural life and are being closed because they are no longer seen as cost effective to run. The ASA seeks to redress this situation by using swimming as a tool to bring schools into the heart of the community through Building Schools for the Future (See ‘Education’ and ‘Building Schools for the Future’). One of the biggest single issues for public pools is the fact that a number of pools built between 30 and 40 years ago are also coming to the end of their natural lives. Given this factor and with swimming forming part of the school curriculum, it is vital that children have easy access to pools at Key Stages 1 and 2.
There are 4,891 pools in England, 1,762 of these being local authority owned. The distribution of these pools is as follows:

In addition to the pools listed above, there are thought to be a further 2,000 school and hotel pools that are too small, not publicly accessible or not identified (Further information on the distribution of facilities is obtainable from the ASA Facilities Department).

The ASA’s perspective on the supply of pools is that:

- there are a considerable number of pools in England and many of these have been built in recent years.
- the distribution channel for swimming is changing with a wide range of pool providers in evidence.
- there is often a wide range of providers in each area.
- whilst in some places the quality of the pools needs to be improved, the ASA needs to work with all providers to ensure that we make the best use of the pools in existence.
- to deliver well, we need both quality pools and the right types of pools to meet the programmes and customer groups that need to be served. The ASA is committed to working with all pool providers to achieve this.
The ASA’s Philosophy

The ASA envisages swimming as being at the heart of the community. Our starting point for considering pools is to ‘think’ people when we consider pool provision. No longer can we think in isolation in terms of designs for pools. Increasingly we want to match the aspirations and values of the public when a pool is conceptualised. Pool design needs to match strategic need and, in this regard, it is important to consider the future as well as the present.

This means that local authorities should match designs to needs. Authorities should assess trends in swimming and make policies for pool use accordingly. Designs should match the policies they have chosen. Both the interpretation of these trends and the policies to be implemented will influence the number of customers. Team work strengthens design outcomes.

In pool designs, we need to understand how people feel in the environment in which we are placing them, i.e. the power of place. Swimming is an intensely emotional experience and for many the ‘magic moment’ of learning to swim is a milestone in their lives. Place is a big part of this experience and this is why design and the related environment are so important. People form bonds with their local pools that can exist throughout their lives.

Swimming is also strongly social and physical. Swimming is a social driver and friendships made at the pool can last a lifetime. It can also create a sense of belonging in many people. For some, however, swimming can be a stressful experience and good design can help to make the pool less threatening.

In general, the ASA’s vision is one of more people swimming more often and having more fun. The technical needs of pool design should embrace the creation of an interesting environment in which people can swim. Intelligent design considers how as many programmes and activities as possible can be integrated in a flexible way.

In order to achieve this, the ASA would like to see pools:

- at the heart of local strategies to build healthier communities.
- meeting the needs of planners and politicians to build better local communities.
- meeting the strategic pathways for participation and talent development.
- fully flexible and multi-purpose so that they can be used by all identified customer segments.
- available to all the community and not just to narrow customer groups; including the most culturally, religiously, behaviourally and physically diverse.
- sited accessibly to all potential user groups.
- designed to the highest standards by knowledgeable and experienced designers and architects and constructed by similarly qualified teams.
- meeting the needs of environmental and financial sustainability.

The needs of swimming

Whilst there are approximately 12 million people who swim each year, the ASA has participation needs which it would like to see addressed. These are engaging with:

- the number of people who state that they would like to swim but do not swim. The latent demand is as high as 4.97 million adults (12% of the population). This is the highest demand for any sport.
- more men. Of the people swimming once a week, only 34% are men.
- young people between the ages of 16 and 19 years.
- people between the ages of 35 and 44 years. Research carried out over a number of years points to the fact that there is a drop off in participation at this life stage.
- the requirement to ‘smooth’ life cycle approaches to participation.
- the need to link the community to the sport.
- the need to see increased customer satisfaction levels by improving and enhancing their experience. The ASA’s target is for 5% more satisfied customers by 2013.

Whilst not being the ASA’s only focus, we know that these are areas that pool design can help to improve. The ASA is targeting 270,000 extra people swimming each week. It wants to contribute towards reaching the Government activity targets of each person taking part in 30 minutes of physical activity 3 times a week.
The ASA’s strategies

The ASA has a number of cross-cutting themes that link with all other strategies. These are that:

- the promotion of a healthy nation should remain a focus in creating more enticing environments in pools.

- a swimming pool should form part of a ‘destination plan’. It might therefore have a catering franchise on site, preferably with a view, related shops, pharmacy, treatment rooms, a library, a poly clinic or a ‘soft entrance’ health centre as the first point in the building. An anchor based tenant might help to drive this. Alternatively, the pool might be part of a Community Sports Hub. Sport England sees the funding of these coming through a range of streams to create a dowry which helps to drive long-term financial viability.

- a ‘knowledge pool’ should be available to local authorities in order to aid decision making. Local authorities are able to obtain the data they require from the ASA Facilities Department.

- pools should always adopt best practice with regard to sustainability.

- architects should design for the present and future. Consideration, therefore, needs to be given to how buildings might be adapted in the future to meet changing needs.

- designers and architects should always think of well planned pool design and programmes as an integrated process. In many regards, they can be seen as the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ issues.

- whilst pools should always be demand led, a variety of design is likely to enhance interest in pools and pool building. Good pool design will help to attract new pool customers.

- social inclusion can only be brought about by ensuring that pool design and equipment present minority groups with the opportunity to take part on terms which meet their cultural needs.

- we need to create a ‘longer experience’ for customers in the pool area and building, i.e. more time spent enjoying the experience of being in the building.

- we need to encourage all facilities to be financially sustainable, they need to be designed and operated to encourage maximum participation.

Braintree learner’s pool with shallow water area and creative designs to encourage children (Photo: S and P Architects)
The ASA’s main themes

Embracing health

The Government has a new cross-government target of 2 million extra people taking part in sport by the time of the 2012 Olympics. With the stimulus of Free Swimming for people aged 60 years and over and 16 years and under, swimming plays a big part in driving this government agenda. The ASA, the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Department for Works and Pensions, the Department of Children, Schools and Families, the Department of Health and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport are working in partnership to bring this about.

One of the aims of Free Swimming is to focus on inactive members of the public becoming active. Thought should be given to how facilities can make it easier for new customers to take part. The initial arrival at the pool can be daunting, particularly to those people who have not visited a pool for many years. Pool buildings as well as staff training need to be conducive to a health environment.

In ‘Be Active, Be Healthy, a plan for getting the nation moving (2009)’, the Department of Health states: ‘The environment has an important influence upon levels of physical activity. We will use the forthcoming national planning policy review to assess the need to strengthen planning policy, or provide additional guidance, open space, sport and recreation, to help tackle obesity and support healthy communities’.

In addition, the Department of Health introduced ‘Let’s Get Moving’, a programme to be recommended by medical practitioners. We would like to see swimming play a strong part in this programme. Unlike ‘Exercise on Referral’, this programme will be by recommendation and very much patient centred. Part of the care pathway, it will be a brief intervention into physical activity. There are therefore likely to be further customers who need to be tempted to the water.

How can planners dovetail with this agenda? Local authorities have a ‘place shaping role’. One way is to ensure pool accessibility. 55% of journeys by car are made within 5 miles and 25% under 2 miles (Forecasting Obesity to 2010, Zaninotto, Wardle, Stamatakis and Mindell, National Centre for Social Research). This entails working with Active Travel in mind. Pools need to have safe walkways, provide secure bike storage so that swimmers can cycle to the pool and ensure that bike lanes to the pools should not be on a main inter-section. Local traffic calming is also an advantage. Whilst it might not be practical for parents with young families it should be as easy for many people to cycle to a pool or use public transport as it should be to take a car. Ensuring that there is a bus stop and adequate public transport near the pool is a must for some participating groups.

The ASA and Sport England are also working on customer satisfaction surveys to measure and understand the experience of those using pools. Facilities are playing a very important part of this approach.

Pools can build social inclusion through their layout and small factors can improve these experiences.

Planned eating areas in close proximity to a pool will become increasingly important. The Government has been working on a Healthy Food Code of Good Practice in partnership with the food and drink industry. The areas for food and drink consumption should always be designed to facilitate this. Cafeterias and vending should offer healthy eating options. Fresh drinking water should also be available as swimmers do become dehydrated. Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives, a Cross Government Strategy for England, HM Government, 2008 calls for ‘information on the nutritional content of food in a wide range of settings’.

Swimming pools have a role to play in a number of different ways. Among the 198 indicators in the National Indicator Set, there are three direct contributions to Adult Participation in Sport and Active Recreation (NI 8), Children and Young People’s Participation in High Quality PE and Sport (NI 57) and Young People’s Participation in Positive Activities (NI 110). More tangentially, well designed pools and programmes can aid with anti social behaviour (NI 21 and 23), adult health and well being (NI 119-121, NI 137-138), tackling exclusion and promoting equality (NI 145-150), children and young people- obesity rate (NI 55) and stronger communities (NI 1 and NI 2).
Education

The 2004 Children Act made it the duty of key agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The learning of swimming offers participation, health benefits and increased personal safety to children and young people. The ASA wants to see school swimming delivered regularly and consistently at Key Stage 2 and for swimming delivery to continue during secondary school years. In recent years, the ASA has worked closely with the Department for Children, Schools and Families to deliver nationally a series of top up swimming lessons to those pupils unable to achieve the Key Stage 2 standard of 25 metres in regularly timetabled school swimming lessons.

Every Child Matters, Change for Children has sought to bring a service co-ordinated approach to improving outcomes and states ‘Children and young people learn and thrive when they are healthy, safeguarded from harm and engaged’. These outcomes take the form of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being. Swimming is linked to the first four of these. None of this will be possible unless appropriate facilities are available to pupils, particularly those at primary school level.

Many school pools that were built out of low cost materials in the post-war period of the 1950’s and 1960’s have come to the end of their working lives. The increased cost of running school pools as well as the cost of keeping ageing stock in working condition has placed pressure on schools to close their pools. Many schools now deliver school swimming at local public pools or through one school site as part of a ‘hub and spoke’ system.

The ASA recognises that we have to consider new ways of delivering school swimming which will both reduce carbon footprint and offer maximum opportunities. We would like to see a reappraisal of existing school facilities. Where possible, larger outdoor school pools should be converted to indoor school and community pools by covering them, possibly with light weight structures. This is particularly relevant to schools in areas where it is difficult to travel to a local authority pool. The ASA will consider a framework agreement with suppliers in order to be able to offer economies of scale to schools.

Portable or panel pools should also be considered as an enhancement but not a substitute for permanent pools. A pool of this nature, which can serve as either a temporary or permanent solution, can be utilised by a group of schools or as the centre of a cluster of schools. They are particularly appropriate in economically disadvantaged areas where young people either do not go swimming with their parents or where schools find it difficult to fund transport to a local pool. Ultimately it is important to link temporary pools back to permanent pools.

The ASA will look to establish Centres of Aquatic Learning at co-location funded schools. The Co-location Fund is a cross-Government fund to support capital projects that enable the co-location of local services. These would be based at schools with their own coordinators and tutors and training for the swimming workforce provided at the same joint use pool.

Any upgraded school facilities should be positioned so as to be accessible to the rest of the community in order that they can be fully utilised during non-school use. This would probably require dual entrances so that the school remains secure and the rest of the community can use the pool at certain times during the day. In this way, maximum utilisation of the pool can be attained.

With regard to other educational institutions, the ASA wishes to see all university pools being available to the local community for, at least, part of the week. We are also keen to encourage further education colleges to consider having their own pool. There are very few colleges with pools in England and we would like to see more. The ASA therefore plans to engage more widely with colleges in order to encourage them to prioritise pool building. Increased swimming participation in colleges and universities will help us to address the drop in the percentage of swimmers in the 16 to 19 year group (See ‘The needs of swimming’) and encourage swimming throughout life. In addition, swimming offers a pathway to employment and further education colleges can help us to train the future workforce.
Building Schools for the Future

Building Schools for the Future Programme, (BSF) is the largest capital investment programme in schools for 50 years and aims to provide world-class teaching and learning environments for all pupils, teachers and communities in England. Over the next 15 to 20 years, BSF aims to help improve the life chances of 3.3 million young people.

BSF creates a significant opportunity for investment in sports facilities of all kinds including pools. BSF provides the chance to consider the community’s need for a pool (to assist its financial viability), and its appropriate location, one of which may be a school site. The Local Education Partnership (LEP) can be used as a delivery mechanism and could improve value for money by avoiding some duplicated elements, e.g. car parking.

Nearly a third of all secondary schools in England are now involved in the BSF programme. Partnerships for Schools is the delivery organisation for BSF. Some of each authority’s funding can be put towards a new or refurbished pool instead of other spaces and the ASA is keen to encourage local authorities to take up this opportunity where it is strategically appropriate. This funding, however, can only be available if the resulting provision satisfies the school’s PE curriculum as well as or better than the standard provision. It will be the task of each local authority to decide whether existing school swimming pools should be maintained as part of their BSF funding allocation.

Swimming pools on school sites have benefited from the Capital Modernisation part of the Government’s Free Swimming Programme. Investment in these projects has been supported by business plans which demonstrate that ongoing operational costs can be met.

The ASA policy is to encourage:

- the case for a pool to be made early in the BSF decision making process when facilities are first being shaped.
- school governors to demonstrate a strategic need for swimming.
- Local Education Partnership (LEP)’s to work with a range of co-funders.
- specialist sports colleges to have their own pool where there is an identified strategic need. Where a college without a school pool has already been completed, they should have a clear link to a close proximity public facility with agreed programme time for educational as well as competitive opportunities.
- sustainable business plans to make a swimming pool both part of a school which is under going BSF and a destination plan at each school.
- greater flexibility in design so that a pool meets the needs of a community.
- pools that are part of a wider BSF project to be part of a broader agreement for communities.
- architects to work closely with the ASA Facilities Department on such projects.

The ASA Strategy, 2009-2013 notes the ASA will meet the challenges by:

- Highlighting the role that pools in schools can play in developing community swimming.
- Highlighting the implications, where an existing pool is under threat, for community, school and club swimming.
- Producing information, including case studies, advising on how pools might be replaced or retained.

The 50 metre pool at the K2 Leisure Centre, Crawley (Photo: K2 Leisure Centre)
Community factors

The ASA would like to see swimming pools at the heart of the community. Traditionally, swimming pools have been one of the great social meeting points in local society and the way our pools look can have a long term effect on stimulating these social interactions. Swimming pools can help to build community cohesion and create better neighbourhoods.

In the ‘Communities in Control, Real people, Real power’ White Paper, the Department of Communities and Local Government sets out an agenda which matches a number of our aspirations:

- we want to see more opportunities to create active citizens or volunteers. In swimming this would take 2 forms - either through volunteering to work in a pool trust or swimming club, or through work in a pool refurbishment or the like. There are a number of pools that currently exist with a mix of volunteer and professional staff. The Office of the Third Sector is investing funds in encouraging people with disabilities to volunteer and the Department for Work and Pensions is looking at ways in which those on benefits can be channelled to help in this way.

- as the ASA sees pools as part of multi-purpose buildings or group of buildings, it is keen to support independent multi-purpose community led organisations and efforts such as the Communitybuilders Scheme and the community endowment fund which will help community based facilities.

- the Department mentions swimming pools in relation to asset transfer, a notion first examined in the Quirk Review (see Community Enterprise Delivery). The consideration for most local authorities is whether they encourage social enterprise as a way of delivering or whether they deliver swimming services themselves.

The ASA will support council actions to divest where a full options appraisal has taken place, when a condition survey has been carried out and where there is a likelihood of a local pool being otherwise closed.

Implementing community policies

Bringing swimming pools to the heart of the community can be achieved by making them attractive places to be. Effectively, swimming and society should be co-located. Pools can build social inclusion through their layout and even small things can improve these experiences.

If we are to increase the number of male swimmers, we need to provide a more challenging environment. Programmes need to be more goal and strength orientated. For instance, this might consist of resistance or weight paddles during water exercise or adjacent wet-dry rooms for triathlon style exercise. Such environments can appeal to both men and women. Pool designs need to allow for areas for adults only swimming from time to time. The essential difference between the gym and that of the pool is that the gym is often an adult experience which many adults prefer.

Flexible pools

The needs of the community can often be met through improving the flexibility of pool space.

Effectively this can be achieved through movable bulkheads and moving floors which can create areas which are a mixture of spaces and can help to bring about programmes which offer something for everyone. Variable water depth can be provided by a moving floor. This can mean shallow entrances for parents and toddlers and can create play areas for them; it may create easier access for disabled people; it can mean deep water areas for diving, water polo, synchronised swimming and sub aqua; and it can also mean standing level water for aqua fit or water exercise.

The bigger the pool, the more it can be divided up and the more members of the community can take part in activities of their choice. 50 metre pools, therefore, represent more than just competitive swimming. They offer opportunities for many more groups to take part and movable bulkheads can create 2 or 3 sections in a main pool.

Image above: British Gas Pools4Schools in the school gym at the City Academy in Bristol. These temporary pools provide solutions for those who face barriers to participation. The long term goal is to convert these participants to regular swimming in pools on permanent sites.
Strategic options available to local authorities

When considering the current pool stock in their area, local authorities are frequently presented with a set of evaluations that they need to make. These are:

- whether the current stock is appropriate to the needs of the community given the population size and the square metres of pool extant.
- the degree to which the stock is likely to meet needs in the future.
- who and how many people will want to swim at any one time in the future.
- what type of activities they will want to carry out in the pool.
- whether pools should cater for competitions and what level of competition.
- whether the design will meet future customer groups (having carried out a customer segmentation analysis) as well as opportunities for talented athletes.
- whether pools not owned by the local authority can be opened up or opened up more for community use.
- the fact that pools built in the 1960's sometimes present difficulties in satisfying building regulations when attempting to upgrade them.
- whether the design will meet future customer groups (having carried out a customer segmentation analysis) as well as opportunities for talented athletes.
- the degree to which the stock is likely to meet needs in the future.
- who and how many people will want to swim at any one time in the future.
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- the fact that pools built in the 1960's sometimes present difficulties in satisfying building regulations when attempting to upgrade them.
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Authorities are then often presented with the following strategic options that they need to consider:

- the closure of old stock and consolidation into existing more modern stock.
- the closure of a number of old pools and the building of fewer but more appropriate and cost efficient new pools. New pools help to meet latent demand.
- whether to sell off the pools to private or community enterprise.
- whether to improve existing stock.
- do nothing.

Decisions can often be made more complex due to a rapidly changing situation. Pool building strategies evolve and these inform decisions. The result is the consolidation of a strategic direction.

The ASA’s position is that:

- pools are important but they must also fit into environmental, transport and people strategies.
- we need to encourage the building of new pools for customers where this is justified.
- these pools need to be sustainable in both environmental and financial terms.
Community Enterprise Delivery

Some local authorities are being presented with two potential scenarios—either to close and replace pools or manage the process through a community approach. The Department for Communities and Local Government established the Quirk Review, an independent review which looked at community management and ownership of assets. Its report, ‘Making Assets Work’ was published in May 2007. The Review considered what the barriers were to communities owning their own assets.

There are already a number of community owned and run pools that were previously owned by local authorities and the ASA believes that there may be further opportunities in the future and is therefore keen to promote links. The ASA recognises that rather than see the closure of some pools without the possibility of a replacement, the option of a community owned and run pool, sometimes staffed by volunteers, is desirable.

Such enterprises should therefore:

- work from the start with the Development Trusts Association to scope out such a scheme.
- carry out a needs and evidence analysis for the enterprise.
- work with experts to produce a business plan that will underpin the viability of such a project.
- give full consideration to the sustainability of such projects.

In collaboration with the Development Trusts Association and the Asset Transfer Unit, the ASA plans to support these policies with a more detailed guidance document that can be used by community enterprise groups to aid their decision making.

Where a local authority decides it cannot afford to run a pool or want to close a pool, it should, subject to audit, be prepared to make a financial contribution and carry out some or all of the necessary maintenance.

Building levels of participation

Good planning can encourage physical activity. Facilities need to be an accelerant to meet programme outcomes. The ASA’s participation target is to convert as many people as possible from swimming once a year to swimming once a week. A pool should be designed so as to offer opportunity to participants whatever their stage in life. We believe that adults are more likely to swim if pools located on school sites have the appearance of community rather than school pools and the sites bring the school into the community. Community sports hubs that have everything on one site are more likely to attract more swimmers.

Designs also have to consider young people. The Department for Children, Families and Schools in ‘Children’s Plan One Year On’, considered that children need to develop in safe environments where they can develop an understanding of risk. Play opportunities for children were also felt to be important, with exciting spaces created for children to play in. The ASA feels that adequate water space should be provided which is introductory in nature.

The National institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has a number of recommendations for the NHS and other professionals which sets out ways to improve the environment so as to encourage physical activity. These are intended to guide future investment in urban design, transport routes and buildings. Whilst these are there to encourage participation, they also impact on the siting of pools. NICE recommended that:

- any planning applications should ‘prioritise the need for people to be physically active as a routine part of their daily life’.
- ‘Pedestrians, cyclists and users of other modes of transport that involve physical activity are given the highest priority when developing or maintaining roads’.

Significantly, the Government has indicated that they will invest in training for planners, architects and designers on the health implications of local plans (e.g. spatial plans and planning applications).

The ASA sees the future participation of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 years as being an area for development. Often this age group is mutually exclusive with other pool users. Designers therefore need to consider how pools can be constructed so that provision for this group can be brought about in an ambience that encourages participation. Examples of this are the creative use of lights, good musical amplification systems, discos, diving boards and the creation of youth club style of sessions. These may also need to include elements of self policing, offering leadership opportunities to individuals and spaces where safety is more difficult to compromise.
Sustainability and environmental impact

The ASA recognises that swimming pools can have a considerable environmental impact and it feels that the future management of this impact is a key tenant of the success of pool design. Full consideration to energy matters should be included at the design stage. Sustainability in pools will be about social, economic and environmental needs seeking to find joint positive outcomes. This can only be achieved through consultation with all key stakeholders at the start.

Meeting the Energy Challenge (The Energy White Paper, Department of Trade and Industry, 2007) sets out the Government’s strategies which are ‘to save energy; develop cleaner energy supplies; and secure reliable energy supplies at prices set in competitive markets’. The Government is seeking to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by between 26-32% by 2020. Swimming pools need to reflect these strategies. This is a hard target given the energy needs of pools but the cost of heating pools has been rising and there is, therefore, a big incentive to look at ways of achieving reductions in both costs and efficiency. The Government is also seeking higher standards on energy saving efficiency related products.

If a swimming pool is built as part of a co-locational shopping facility, the Local Government White Paper should be borne in mind. Here, the Government has been working with the British Council of Shopping Centres. The Local Government White Paper 2006 sets out a new Local Government Performance Framework (The Energy White Paper, Department of Trade and Industry, 2007, p. 278) which was designed to meet the climate change commitments made in the 2006 Climate Change Programme. This was framed so as to strengthen the local authorities’ hand in this field.

Sustainability needs to be considered at both a strategic and operational level and the stakeholders involved will therefore be different. At strategic level the considerations are broader, societal aims whilst at local and operational level, the considerations are more associated with climate change. Swimming is by nature a contributor to environmental change. The aim should be to make sure that the strategic and the operational move together to maximum effect. A decision making tool should be created and robust decisions made at the start of design and build. The decision making tool should include what the water, energy and chemical use will be; whether the projections are reasonable; what the tolerances are and what actions can be taken when either of these targets are not being met and, also, what the likely impacts are during the latter life stages of the pool.

Within the ASA, the policies are to:

- prevent pollution, reduce waste and ensure, wherever practicable, that measures are implemented to protect and preserve natural habitats, flora and fauna.

- promote environmental awareness amongst our suppliers, contractors and partners by implementation of operational procedures.

- seek to work in partnership with the community by behaving in a considerate and socially responsible manner.

- ensure effective and expedient incident control, investigation and reporting.

- take action to eliminate or reduce, as far as practicable, any potentially adverse environmental impacts.

- consider the effects that our operations may have on the local community.

We would like to see these basic approaches also pursued in pool construction and operation and extended to meet with Approved Guidance as issued by the Environment Agency and to be compliant with environmental management standard, ISO 14001.

The ASA sees itself as a catalyst for greater environmental awareness. For many planners, the main challenge will be to decide what is important in environmental outcomes. This occurs at a number of levels through:

- the impact on building the pool on the surrounding environment.

- the effect of day to day operations on the environment.

- the impact of pool users and employees, the distance they travel to the pool and how they travel.

Pools require constant heat and therefore the buildings have an impact on the environment. Combined heat and power (CHP), the simultaneous generation of usable heat and power, should be encouraged because other buildings and pools can benefit through reduced costs and environmental impact. Similarly, there may be other sustainable sources and renewable energy sources and these should be investigated and applied locally.

Local authorities will have an emission’s baseline and the swimming pool will form part of this. It should be recognised that this could change in the future. Forecasts should therefore account for this. The Energy Saving Trust refers to calculating ‘the value at stake’. They define this as ‘the overall cost benefit that will be gained by achieving the reduced emissions scenario compared to following a ‘business as usual scenario’. These benefits and costs, determined in monetary terms, can include both direct costs (e.g. energy) and indirect costs (e.g. reputation) costs’.
Many planners will use Building Research Establishment Environmental Research Method (BREEAM) in seeking to establish facilities that have a low impact on the environment. The BREEAM uses a score system which is easy to understand and is based on evidential research. BREEAM Communities is a tool designed to work with the planning stages of developments and will be useful where a swimming pool forms part of a complex of buildings or is seated within a planned community. It considers projects along the 8 dynamics in Regional Sustainability Checklists, all of which have a relationship to pools, e.g. place making and transport and movement. The Carbon Trust works with organisations to reduce carbon emissions and to develop low carbon commercial technologies. It provides a full range of advice and should form part of any consultation process. British Gas has an Energy 360 Programme which consists of an audit and advice on energy management services. This will embrace swimming pools.

**Planning water space**

When planning pools, there is an important relationship between the activities envisaged for that pool and the design of water space. The relationship between planned activities, and hence, identified customer segments and spatial requirements is closely allied. For example, if lane swimming is taking place, it is possible that anything between 8 and 20 swimmers can take part in one lane depending on the length of the pool and speed of the individuals. By comparison, aquarobics (not deep water aquarobics) requires water depth that an individual can stand in and a smaller water space per participant than that required for fast swimming.

All the research tells us that women feel personal space in a pool is very important. *Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools* (HSG 179, p.66, 203) recommended 3 square metres per bather for unprogrammed sessions as a start point but this will vary from activity to activity. Whilst 3 square metres is a benchmark for the maximum number of swimmers in a pool during unprogrammed sessions, i.e. general bathing sessions, 6 square metres per person is the comfort ratio above which public swimmers would consider the pool conditions to be crowded. The requirement for water surface area for diving will be affected by the number of boards, the size of the diving pool and the competency of the divers. Sport England regard all of this as ‘personal share of a pool’ which they feel is governed by 4 factors- the size of the pool, the rate of participation, the number of people who are sharing the pool and the pool opening hours. As a guide, it is worth contacting the ASA Facilities Department to seek their advice.

The refurbished Clifton Lido, situated close to the centre of Bristol, which has recently been converted into an infinity pool heated mainly by solar panels. Set in an urban environment with houses around it, the pool was a Victorian lido, which was originally opened on July 29th 1850 with a single admission fee of one shilling (c. 5p) and eventually sold by the council to developers in 1990. With over 600 club members, the pool offers an unusual environment with a restaurant adjacent to the pool itself. The pool was designed by architects, Marshall Kendon, who worked with English Heritage on the redevelopment (Photo: Bob Holman)
Strategic considerations

Preparing

Consideration for new or refurbished pools should always be preceded by:

- a feasibility study and preparation of a business plan.
- a condition survey in the case of refurbished pools.
- securing political support.
- building community support. From April 2009, ‘duty to involve’ local people in key decisions was extended and covers sports organisations.
- the establishment of a strategic steering group (later to metamorphose into a project management group).
- the establishment of initial links with other local authority strategies, e.g. cultural, health, green space and environmental, community, community safety, children and learning and housing and regeneration strategies.
- a review of national, regional and local policies which includes the possible development of a cross-boundary liaison group.
- identification of all initial staff and resources to set the process in train.

It should also be borne in mind that the Department for Communities and Local Government is in the process of introducing a new duty for councils to respond to petitions, Communities in Control, Real people, Real power. The same paper also states that the Department wants people to have more say in the planning system and will provide funding to support community engagement in planning.

Planning

A Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG 17) Technical Study helps to create a sense of direction for a local authority (Planning For Open Space Sport and Recreation, 2002).

The audit, which the Government expects all local authorities to carry out, helps to identify local needs across all open space, recreational and leisure facilities and orchestrates the prioritisation of a local authority’s requirement based on needs.

In town centres, the Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS 6) (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister), sets out a plan-led approach for town centres including leisure facilities and more intensive sport and recreation uses. These should dovetail with Regional Spatial Strategies (PPS 11).

Where relevant, pools should form part of Multi Area Agreements (MAAs). These agreements, which result from coordinated action across a range of policy interventions by public and private sector partners, cover a functional area which includes a number of local authorities. The MAA’s, which were introduced in 2008, lead to the Government devolving more power with local agencies pledging to boost economic growth and tackle deprivation and financial inequalities.

In Green Space Strategy, a good practice guide, written by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE, 2004), the need for local authorities to consider equity of leisure facility provision is stressed. It recommends open space strategies. A Green Space Strategy sets out a local authority’s vision for its green spaces and the goals it wants to achieve. It also lays out the resources and methods required to meet these goals. Whilst concerned with outdoor facilities, pools built in a park environment are a consideration.

In such cases, we would like to see pools placed on the periphery of parks to make them more accessible. One approach might be to site a pool in an active park with walkways, cycle ways, bowling greens and green gyms for exercise in the park. The pool might also be indoor with a swim through to an outdoor all year round facility.

Evidence and needs analysis

Like Sport England, the ASA believes that decisions on pool build should always be based on robust data and information gathering. A period of public consultation and market research that informs the decision making process are vital both as a way of including people in the decision making process and for the forensic analysis of likely future customer segments. These will help to determine where a pool should be located, why one is needed and what size and dimensions of pool would best serve the community. It will also help to determine what the local demand is for specific activities within the pool when it is completed.

Decision making can be informed through a number of further tools. These include an analysis of annual admission and teaching prices and of pool hire charges compared to that of other local authorities. These can be obtained from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Further information on the location of pools of all types can be obtained through an information search on Sport England’s Active Places web site. An evidence and needs analysis as well as a dilapidation survey should always inform as to whether a pool needs to be re-furbished or replaced. In support of this, the ASA and Sport England have produced a ‘dashboard’ of information as part of our guidance for local aquatic strategies which will appear on our website.
Regional Observatories

Regional Observatories provide key regional data and intelligence on economic, social and environmental issues. Regional Observatories and Regional Intelligence Groups are comprised of partnerships between regional development agencies, Government Offices, Regional Assemblies and other bodies. Their work can help to inform planning for pools based on their knowledge of regional developments. The Observatories help to alleviate duplication of effort.

Sport England Facility Planning

Through the Sports Facility Improvement Service, Sport England provides a full range of pool planning services for local authorities and the ASA recommends that these are used by local authorities as part of any decision making process on aquatic facilities. Launched in 2007, it was essentially a response to the Audit Commission Report of 2006. Local authorities are now adopting a more considered approach to pool planning and this has called for a more sophisticated approach to analysis. Sport England’s aim is to build up the capabilities of local authorities in strategic planning.

Sport England Regional Strategies

All Sport England’s regions now have their own overarching strategy and a number have a facilities strategy. These should all be considered in any capital development for pools.

Demographics and participation data

Whilst local authorities will have their own data on population projections within their own planning department, Sport England provides a ‘population look up table’ via its web site. This offers data on government regions, local authorities and county sport partnerships with associated population projections.

Market segmentation tool

Sport England also provides a market segmentation tool. This builds on the results of the Active People Survey and Experian’s Mosaic tool to provide 19 segments which can be applied to a local authority. This segmentation can be applied at all levels and describes the sporting habits of people. Segmentation can be used to inform as to whom likely participants in a future pool might be. There are many other ways of segmenting and segmentation is an important way of looking at future customer groups.

Active People diagnostic

The Active People tool, which is based on England’s largest sporting survey of sport and active recreation, is an on-line diagnostic which can be used to identify levels of participation all levels whether this is local, regional or national. It can identify participation based on a number of factors, including demographics, regularity of participation and sub-type. The tool allows users to analyse sporting habits in their area.

Swimmers in Wirral joining in with water based activities as part of the Wirral’s Big Swim Week. Aqua Jogging raised a considerable amount of interest and people were keen to become involved in this new water based activity which they had not experienced before (Photo: Everyday Swim)
**Facilities data**

**Active Places and Active Places Power**

The ASA also recommends the use of Active Places. Active Places is an on-line tool which provides information on pools. It offers the opportunity to compare pools within one local authority with that of another. For example, these comparisons might be between local authorities that are geographically adjacent or it might be a comparison with the closest Squared Euclidean Authorities (SED’s). SED’s, a clustering method, identifies the local authorities that are closest to one another along 42 dimensions established by National Statistics.

*Active Places Power,* also available on-line through Sport England, provides local authorities with a more flexible planning tool. It offers the capacity to create thematic maps, reports and data. The range of use can be anything from a PPG17 assessment of built sport facilities to assessing the 20 minute walking and car travel catchments for a facility.

**Sports Facility Calculator**

The Sports Facility Calculator can be used to estimate the amount of demand for a swimming pool based on a given size of population. It can help to estimate how much extra water space is required if a development area increases by a given amount and what the cost would be given current build values. The Calculator has no spatial dimension. It cannot be used for strategic gap analysis. It provides a total demand for a given chosen population based on peak demand and a pool being used a given number of times a week per person.

**Aquatic strategies**

Whilst more swimming is delivered by the commercial sector than in the past, local authorities remain a key ASA partner. We see local authorities playing an important part in helping us to meet our Key Performance Indicators (see below) and in providing facilities for areas that are less likely to attract commercial sector finance such as diving, disability swimming, synchronised swimming and 50 metre community pools.

The ASA Strategy, 2009-2013 encourages all local authorities to produce their own aquatic strategy. The ASA considers that these will be an important component of local swimming delivery over the coming years. A local aquatic strategy will help to inform pool provision, design and management. It should set out the needs of the community over the coming years and determine what type, where and how the aquatics will be delivered.

The relationship between a local aquatic strategy and pool planning should therefore be inextricably linked. It forms the basis for considering the people who will be using pools and designing to meet their requirements.

**Built environment**

A long term view of a building should always be taken. Whole lifecycle costs of a pool must be considered. This will include the cost of equipment, building, parts and servicing. Often there is a decoupling between operating and capital costs. Costs increase towards the end of the life of a pool.

The £20 million, 50 metre pool in Rijeka, Croatia. The pool, which has a retractable roof and is situated by the Adriatic shows how community, competitive aquatics and tourism use can be combined effectively. In 2008, the pool was configured to 25 metres as the venue for the European Short Course Championships and in 2010, as a 50 metre pool, it hosted the Euro League Water Polo Final Four event.
The ASA feels that every pool construction needs a ‘champion’ for that pool who works on the client side of the project. Contractors and project managers need to continue to find better ways of collaborating with architects. This type of collaboration was recommended in *Rethinking Construction (The Egan Report, Sir John Egan, The Construction Task Force, For John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, 1998)* and then in ‘Accelerating Change’, which stated ‘Clients should require the use of integrated teams and long term supply chains and actively participate in their creation’.

There are many issues that designers and architects have to face and therefore operators should be involved in the project team at an early stage. Among these is the difficulty of trying to reduce capital costs. Pools often suffer from cost cutting measures which have a long term impact. For example, some pools are completed without access areas which provide the opportunity to examine and replace important parts of the building. These are often considered to be an extra cost during the build phase and yet, years later, when a part of a building is difficult to access, the cost is often greater. In addition, sinking funds are eroded by inflation and economic conditions.

Architects should consider working with technical specialists to help deliver specific areas of the design. This might include for example sustainability, migration of condensation, energy, vapour control, dealing with humid air in roof voids and water treatment. Some local authorities work through a quality matrix. This enables them to employ a turnkey approach to already listed contractors.

Architects must also be prepared to consider new ideas, materials and construction methods. By their nature, pools are challenging buildings to design and operate. Open minds often lead to new ideas; these should be thoroughly researched and tested as there are a number of examples of failed innovation in pools today.

Pool equipment should meet current health and safety standards and all equipment should always conform to the European Standard (prEN 13451 Parts 1-11 European Committee for Standardisation). The European Standards Committee was established in the late 1990’s specifically to look at standards in swimming pools. New draft standards which took into account the Federation Internationale De Natation’s dimensional requirements were created in December 2001 and became standard in 2002. These comprised 11 parts and a number of standards have been subsequently produced. Typical examples are Swimming Pools Part 1: Safety requirements for design, BSEN 15288 - 1:2008 and Swimming Pools Part 2: Safety requirements for operation, BSEN 15288 - 2:2008.

**Approaches to funding**

The projected financial climate will impact on each local authority’s decision as to whether to build a pool or not. Potential funding sources are likely to remain but the decision making process will be even more rigorous.

Although there are many sources, the ASA sees the main opportunities over the next few years as being via:

- part divestment of a local authority’s property portfolio.
- asset release of other local authority properties.
- part of a Section 106 agreement, e.g. linked to a road or shopping centre provision.
- part of a wider development or co-located facility paid for by the private and/or public sector.
- private/public finance initiatives or partnership.
- Prudential borrowing.
- cross funding of projects.

- grants from public sector bodies such as Regional Development Agencies, sports foundations or from charitable trusts.
- a contra arrangement or local authority owned land release schemes with the private sector.
- Government capital schemes.
- part through learning and skills councils.

Our view is that it will require a creative approach to funding and new funding methods with have to be sought in addition to those mentioned above. Each funding stream will present a local authority with a different risk which will need to be assessed. There may also be combinations of funding.

The Pond’s Forge Pool, Sheffield - 50 metres long, the pool has the capacity to be split into 3 sections as well as being capable of 25 and 50 metre competitions.
ASA framework for pools

All publicly accessible swimming pools, regardless of the competition specification, should be designed and considered as a community pool. The swimming pool type also depends on the ancillary provisions which are necessary to hold this type of event (e.g. the number of spectator seats, width of pool surrounds, sufficient car parking, provision of refreshment facilities). To meet swimming development and participant pathways, the ASA has the following framework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swimming - Pool Type</th>
<th>Advertised Length (m)</th>
<th>Actual Length (m)</th>
<th>Width (m)</th>
<th>No. of Lanes</th>
<th>Lane Width (m)</th>
<th>Side Margin (m)</th>
<th>Depth Minimum (m)</th>
<th>Depth Preferred (m)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major International Competition Pool</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50.02</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.0min</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50</td>
<td>50.02</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.20-0.50</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<td>ASA National Competition</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50.02</td>
<td>19 min 21 pref</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.25-2.5</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1-1.80</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training Pool</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1-1.80</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Course National/ Regional Competition Pool</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25.01</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Course Competition Pool</td>
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<td>25.01</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1-1.80</td>
<td></td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.9-1.25</td>
<td>1.0-2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Pool</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.9-1.25</td>
<td>1.0-2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Pool</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.9-1.25</td>
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<td>Learner Pool</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>0.6-0.90</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water Polo - Pool Type</th>
<th>Advertised Length (m)</th>
<th>Actual length of playing area (m)</th>
<th>Actual width of playing area (m)</th>
<th>Behind goal areas (m)</th>
<th>Depth Minimum (m)</th>
<th>Depth Preferred (m)</th>
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<tr>
<td>International/National Water Polo League Pool-Men</td>
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<td>30.6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.66 x 2</td>
<td>1.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>International/National Water Polo League Pool-Women</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synchronised Swimming - Pool Type</th>
<th>Advertised Length (m)</th>
<th>Actual length - competition area (m)</th>
<th>Width (m)</th>
<th>Depth Minimum (m)</th>
<th>Depth Preferred (m)</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>National Competition</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>2.50</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diving Boards</th>
<th>Length (m)</th>
<th>Width (m)</th>
<th>Height (m)</th>
<th>Depth of water at plummet (m)</th>
<th>Depth of water at plummet (m)</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1m springboard</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>3m springboard</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>1m platform</td>
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<td>0.60-1.00</td>
<td>3.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>3m platform</td>
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<td>0.60-1.50 (pref)</td>
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<td>3.60</td>
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<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.80</td>
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<td>7.5m platform</td>
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<td>3.00</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>4.10</td>
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<td>10m platform</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) As recognised by Federation Internationale De Natation & Ligue Europenne De Natation
(Standard timing pad widths are 1.9 (2m lanes) or 2.4 (2.5m lanes). 2.25m wide lanes require bespoke timing pads)
(2) Further information on recommended pool sizes for swimming, water polo and synchronised swimming and diving board configurations are available through the ASA Facilities Department
(3) For people diving off starting blocks
(4) Regarded as the minimum width
(5) In the case of Community Pools, the ASA likes to see a shallow end depth of a minimum of 0.9 to 1.25 metres and a deep end at a minimum depth of 1.8 metres)
Competition

Whilst the ASA advocates the building of pools of all types, it has a particular remit for competition where the ASA’s success is frequently measured in terms of its achievements at nurturing talented individuals and developing pathways so that talented people can achieve international success. International success is important because it serves as our shop window and this encourages more people to take part in aquatics. We also have a role in offering competitive opportunities to the very many swimmers who enjoy taking part and who are never likely to see international success.

The ASA recommends that pools are kept as flexible as possible with movable bulkheads and floors. One example of this flexibility would be the provision of a diving pool with a movable floor which could also be used as a teaching pool, water polo and a synchronised swimming training area. Whilst the FINA recommendation for a competition pool is 25 metres, a training pool which was designed to accommodate all disciplines could be as much as 30 metres in length.

Our aspiration is that flexible swimming pools will be built that give our clubs the opportunity to flourish and for all participants to move along the swimmer pathway. This means swimmers following the Long Term Athlete Development Model, a scientifically researched approach to swimmer development. Within this flexibility, the ASA has created a hierarchical structure to drive its programmes and the facilities within this structure should meet these hierarchical needs.

Performance and international level pools

As of September 2009, there were 19 pools of 50 metres in length in England. Among these, Loughborough University, Bath University and Stockport have been identified by the ASA as 3 of the 5 International Training Centre Pools for swimming.

Whilst the ASA has no finite target for 50 metre indoor pools other than to encourage the building of as many of them as possible where there is an identified demand, comparisons with other successful European countries provide a useful guide. Based on the last figures available in 2007, France had 90 such pools or approximately one 50 metre pool to every 672,178 members of the population; the Netherlands had 11 pools or one to every 1,481,727 and Sweden had 15 pools or 1 pool to every 602,733 members of the population. Based on figures at that time, England had 16 pools or one pool to every 3,193,375 (LEN European Market Review, 2007).

The ASA’s policies are therefore to encourage:

- further building of community 50 metre pools.
- 8 to 10 lane 25 and 50 metre pools with movable floor and bulkhead to maximise flexibilities.
- further pools in all universities which see pools as an attraction for students.
International Training Centres

Swimming
Water Polo
Synchronised Swimming
Diving
Disability
**Pools with Beacon programmes**

The Beacon Programmes were established in 2009 with a view to increasing the number of English swimmers being ranked as world class. The programme was designed to help cover some of the areas of England not covered by performance programmes and to support existing performance programmes. The programmes dovetail with a further programme of talent camp provision and will be key delivery structures for workforce development.

The ASA intends that as many of the disciplines as possible will be delivered at each of the Beacon Programmes. The centres or planned centres are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beacon Programme</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Swimming</th>
<th>Diving</th>
<th>Water Polo</th>
<th>Synchro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunderland</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West London</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Palace</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
<td>South East</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plymouth</td>
<td>South West</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exact details, including the allocation of disciplines to each centre, will not be completed for all centres until 2011.

The need in each centre is for a 50 metre, 8 lane, 2.5 to 3 metres deep pool with maximum flexibility. There will be economies of scale with land conditioning, all water work, coach mentoring, coach apprenticeships, sports science support for athletes and scientific and anthropological measurements all being delivered at one centre.
The Olympic Aquatic Centre

The 2012 Olympic Aquatics Centre in London will have iconic status during the Games and an important legacy role when the Aquatics Centre will be one of the key facilities left in the park following the Games. The Centre’s immediate impact will be felt across four neighbouring London boroughs and this effect will ripple over a much wider area. Whilst being built primarily to meet the needs of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Aquatics Centre will become a premier swimming centre in London and will offer competitive aquatics an important training and competition facility in the capital.

The facility may in legacy mode include leisure water and will include a health and fitness area to help to meet the Government’s anti-obesity and life style goals. The ASA’s policy will be to work with the Institute of Swimming with a view to providing a national swimming academy and the ASA plans to develop a comprehensive aquatics based workforce training programme. The ASA proposes that the Centre will become the London Region Swimming Centre of Excellence for training and development. It will also demonstrate good practice by operating as a community and competitive training facility all within the same pool complex. It is envisaged that the pool will become an integral part of the community of east London and be widely used for health and leisure swimming.

With the addition of the Olympic and other 50 metre pools, it is the ASA’s policy to attract major world and European events to our pools and other arenas.

50m Community Pools

From Arm Bands to Gold Medals set out the ASA’s aspirations for 50-metre community pools. This policy document continues these aspirations. From Arm Bands to Gold Medals’ stated: ‘It is recognised that communities differ in terms of the quantity and quality of swimming provision, and the financial position and priorities of providers. Therefore there is no one ideal model of facility provision’.

It was felt that any new provider of either new or enhanced facilities will need to determine that there is sufficient demand to meet the scale of provision envisaged. Sport England’s Sports Facility Improvement Service and Sports Facility Calculator can be used to aid decision making. 50-metre pools and diving facilities need to serve the needs of communities and clubs and a local swimming development plan needs to be developed which includes elite training as part of the programmed use.

Due to travel times and known participation rates for swimming, it is likely that only major urban areas will be able to support a 50-metre community pool. There is likely to be a considerable financial commitment towards training and competition facilities. In order to maximise income potential and meet the needs of the surrounding local community, pools need to be designed to be as flexible as possible. From Arm Bands to Gold Medals states that ‘Well designed specialist facilities can contribute to meeting more general swimming needs and, at the same time, strengthen the excellence stage of the swimmer pathway. When assessing local needs, local authorities should, therefore, consider the broader specialist swimming requirements of an area.’

Typical examples of these requirements might include a small amount of leisure water or a hydrotherapy pool. There is a need to recognise the multi-functional nature of swimming facilities to avoid possible duplication in an area.

Although they are of a similar size, community pools differ from the ITC pools in the nature of their focus in that they are mainly directed towards their own or regional populations. The pools need to meet local community strategies and, given the need for more pools to meet participation targets and the ASA Key Performance Indicators (below), the ASA sees local authorities as being vital to satisfying the needs of those who wish and need to swim.
Top images: Two concepts of the future 2012 London Olympic Pool (Reproduced by permission of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games)

Bottom left: The leisure water area at the Pingles Leisure Centre, Nuneaton

Bottom right: Concepts of the planned complex at Uxbridge with the indoor pool and refurbished outdoor lido in close proximity (Photo: FaulknerBrowns Architects)
Diving

Diving is a small but growing sport and recent international and Olympic success is likely to increase this rate of growth. There are currently 99 diving facilities of different types with approximately 1200 registered divers although there are many more people who dive for leisure or who are not registered and dive at a basic level.

The addition of synchronised diving to programmes during the 1990’s has increased the level of interest in the sport. Unfortunately, there are insufficient diving boards or platforms of the correct width for both practice and competition in this diving event.

The ASA’s need for diving is to increase the number of diving pools throughout the country, particularly those pools being constructed with 1, 3 and 5 metre platforms and/or springboards. Divers in certain parts of the country either have to travel considerable distances to train or have not been able to enter the initial diver pathway. This situation is in part being addressed through the Beacon Programme but there are still considerable gaps.

The ASA will pursue the following additional policies for diving:

- England has a shortfall of dry land training areas and ideally there is a need for any new diving facilities to be accompanied by such a facility.
- an increase in diving facilities in the East Midlands, West Midlands and the North Regions (other than the Manchester-Liverpool conurbations).

Water polo

Water polo is played up and down the country and an area of deep water within the pool is required for the sport. The ASA wants to encourage more pools to consider water polo both as a fully fledged sport and as an alternative to swimming for young people in the form of mini water polo. Water polo can be played in quite small areas but national and international level polo requires a depth of 2 metres. There are too few pools with a full playing area which can offer 2 metres in depth and this has proved internationally disadvantageous to us.

The ASA recommends the employment of:

- movable booms and pool floors to create water polo playing areas whilst leaving other parts of the pool for other activities. These generally apply to 50 metre pools which are able to offer a full 30 by 20 metre international sized playing area.
- 25 metre 8 lane pools designed to include water polo. An 8 lane pool with a minimum of 1.8 metres depth gives a more appropriate width to the playing area.
- fully integrated diving pools that are wide enough to form deep water, water polo training areas during periods when the pool is not used by divers. Diving pools actually provide a 3 sport option-diving, water polo and synchronised swimming and, therefore, can aid pool programming.
- water polo sessions that are actively built into swimming pool programmes.
- a network of water polo centres aimed at attracting young people, both male and female.

Synchronised swimming

Synchronised swimming is increasing in popularity and requires a pool which is of a minimum depth of 2.5 metres. The ASA wants to see an increase in the number of pools capable of staging training and competition for synchronised swimming. Other than the International Training Centre at Aldershot Garrison, there is only one other pool, at Pond’s Forge, Sheffield, with a depth of 2.5 metres across a surface area that would meet the standards of international competition. This is approximately 30 metres x 25 metres.

Although synchronised swimming can be carried out without any of these facilities, local authorities that are considering new pools need to design to include:

- a sizeable pool deck for coaching and walking through routines. This should be a minimum of 2 metres for health and safety purposes.
- audio and visual aids in close proximity to practice area.
- underwater, deck level and over head speakers situated in the auditorium to avoid sound delays for competition and underwater and deck level speakers for training purposes.
- an underwater viewing area for coaching with access from the pool deck.
- for ideal facilities, trampoline and steel cable rigging above the pool for training purposes.
Disability swimming

Swimming offers those with disabilities a sport which they can enjoy and build a sense of achievement, irrespective of their disability. Disability swimming is also the gateway to competing in the Paralympic Games. Sport England has published guidance on Access for Disabled people and this includes a section on swimming pools. The ASA supports the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) in its aim to encourage all sporting organisations to provide inclusive facilities. ‘Accessible facilities’ is one of the five key areas of IFI’s model and all pools should endeavour to achieve IFI accreditation. The IFI Mark offers advice and consultancy across five key areas which are considered to be fundamental to offering truly inclusive provision - facility accessibility, fitness equipment specification, staff training, marketing and policies and procedures. All facilities undertaking the IFI Mark assessment receive an access audit of the remaining public areas of the facility.

The design of a pool impacts on the capacity of disabled people to take part at a swimming pool. Swimming pools should pro-actively seek to attract disabled people by providing them with facilities that are appropriate to their needs. The Disability Discrimination Acts, 1995 and 2005 covers all aspects of an organisation’s service provision and the facility ‘offering’ plays a key part in the overall delivery. Pools should, therefore, provide disabled people the opportunity to take part at the same time as able bodied through friendly facilities and knowledgeable staff. Disabled people need to feel confident both in their surroundings during participation and that they can take part without it being to the detriment of themselves and fellow pool users.

The attitude of staff members has a major impact on accessibility and enjoyment of swimmers experiences, therefore staff training should focus on recognising the needs of all users so that service and behaviour can be adapted accordingly.

Open water swimming

The success in the 10 kilometre open water events at the 2008 Olympics has generated considerable interest in open water swimming as a whole. Thousands of people are taking part in events which were once the domain of only a handful of enthusiasts. The ASA sees this as a trend which is set to continue. We are, therefore, keen to influence local authorities who have designated open water multi sport areas to continue to provide appropriate facilities, such as jetties and permanent changing facilities, for these events.

Open Water should take place in areas where there are like activities, e.g. triathlon. Also, water quality should always be monitored. Over the next two years, the ASA plans to identify key sites for participation in open water swimming, identify where investment should be made into facilities and update its safety and operating procedures. Given the recent increase in interest, we will also review the need for specific open water strategies to meet this rapidly growing market.

Life saving

Life saving has an important role to play in informing and educating people on water safety and resuscitation. Within swimming facilities, life saving’s extended role is to train pool operating staff and help to provide a steady stream of people trained in water rescue who act in employed or voluntary roles as well as to increase the number of clubs dedicated to the activity. The Royal Life Saving Society considers that the best training facility is one with a rectangular pool with good space on the decks surrounding the pool. Lifesaving and resuscitation and medical holding rooms can double for other users.
An ideal pool?

We advocate a strategic approach to the building of pools and that the pools that are provided meet identified needs. Pools need to be well located. There are benefits in locating pools in schools, colleges or universities or along with other services. Ideally these services would contain provision for other sports, schools, a healthplex, library, sports shop and learning centre. This would encourage consumers to go swimming as an everyday behavioural habit, given that they will also use these other services. Finally, transport should be linked and create a first option for ‘active’ transport.

Our conclusion is that there is no ideal pool. There are, however, ‘preferred ASA configurations’. These would be pools that provide opportunities for fitness, health and education in all the disciplines and that are either 6, 8 or 10 lanes wide, 25 metres or 50 metres in length with a movable floor and bulkhead, a learner’s pool and an ‘introductory’ small leisure pool. Whereas the other aquatic disciplines could be catered for within this structure, we recognise that deeper water would be required for diving and, if this depth was variable, it might double as a teaching pool. This could either be provided by creating a learner’s pool with a moving floor or through a separate diving area/pool. Any decision should be based on the information gathered in the rigorous process of planning identified earlier in the document.

Within this preferred configuration, there is, however, considerable room for variation and all good designers should look to continue to innovate to enhance the unique experience of taking part in aquatics.

Key performance indicators

The ASA Strategy 2009-13 sets out our Key Performance Indicators. We identify the main outcome which is to ‘Encourage the Government and others in authority, to recognise the value of swimming and to provide a sufficient number of well designed and managed swimming facilities, which meets both the general and specific needs of the community, clubs and talent programmes’. In order to achieve this, the targets are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of 50m pools</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of 25m 8 lane pools</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>90</td>
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<td>92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of 25m 10 lane pools</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of international standard diving venues</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Consultant: Kelvin Juba, HNI International