

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister's Office
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

15th February 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We implore you to act with urgency to address this.

Yours sincerely,

Active Partnerships

Association for Public Service Excellence

Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity

Community Leisure UK

Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association

District Councils' Network

Local Government Association

Sported

Sport and Recreation Alliance

Sport for Development Coalition

Swim England

Swimming Teachers' Association

Youth Sport Trust

ukactive

1Life Management Solutions
Abbeycroft Leisure
Active IQ
Active Nation
Activity Alliance
Alliance Leisure Services
Anytime Clubs UK
Aquatic Therapy Association of Chartered Physiotherapists
Archery GB
Arthritis Action
Association of British Climbing Walls
Atrium Fitness
Badminton England
Barnsley Premier Leisure
Baseball Softball UK
Basketball England
BH Live
Boccia England
British American Football Association
British Association of Sport Rehabilitators and Trainers
British Canoeing
British Cycling
British Dressage
British Equestrian
British Fencing
British Gymnastics
British Ice Skating
British Judo
British Mountaineering Council
British Paralympic Association
British Rowing
British Shooting
British Showjumping
British Swimming Pool Federation
British Taekwondo
British Triathlon
British Water Ski & Wakeboard
British Weightlifting
British Wheelchair Basketball
British Wrestling
Club Kingswood
Code Fitness
Coordinate Sport
David Lloyd Leisure
Durham County Council
Edinburgh Leisure
Edstart Sports Coaching
eGym GmbH
EMD UK
Endurance GB
England and Wales Cricket Board

England Athletics
England Bowls
England Boxing
England Golf
England Handball
England Hockey
England Lacrosse
England Netball
England Squash
English Indoor Bowling Association
Everybody Health & Leisure
Fisikal
Fitness First Clubs
Fitness4Less
Freedom Leisure
FTC Gym
Fusion Lifestyle
GB Boxing
Gladstone
GM Active
Goalball UK
Good Boost
Great Britain Diving Federation
Great Britain Outrigger
Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby
Greenhouse Sports
GLL
Halo Leisure
Hurlingham Polo Association
InBody UK
InspireAll
International Longevity Centre UK
Junior Adventure Group
Karate Union of Great Britain
Keepme
Laban Guild International
Leeds City Council – Sport
Leisure-net Solutions
Lifestyle Fitness
Limbpower
Miha Bodytec
Mosaic Spa & Health Clubs
Move it or Lose it
Move Technologies
Myzone
North Lanarkshire Council
Nuffield Health
Orbit4
Orthopaedic Research UK
Outdoor Industry Association
Parkour UK

Parkwood Leisure
Pentathlon GB
Places Leisure
PureGym
Quartz Sequoia Events
Richmond Group of Charities
Rounders England
Royal Life Saving Society UK
Royal Yachting Association
Rugby Football League
Rugby Football Union
Scottish Leisure Network Group
Sense
Simply Smiles
Skateboard GB
SLM Community Leisure Charity Trust
SLM Health and Fitness
Snowsport England
Snowsport Wales
Sport Aberdeen
Sport for Confidence
Sports Leaders
Squash Wales
Stevenage Leisure Limited
Surfing England
Swim Wales
Swimming Pool and Allied Trades Association
Table Tennis England
The Food Addiction Coach
The Golf Foundation
The Gym Group
Thomas Pocklington Trust
Total Fitness
Trilogy Active
UK Athletics
UK Ultimate
Vivify
Volleyball England
Wales Golf
Wales Netball
Water Babies
Watford FC Community Trust
Welsh Athletics
Welsh Cycling
Welsh Judo
Welsh Sports Association
Welsh Triathlon
Women In Sport
Women's Sport Collective
Zoom Media

Rebecca Adlington OBE
Chemmy Alcott
Claire Cashmore MBE
Ed Clancy OBE
James Cracknell OBE
Ben Cutmore
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