



Our Ref: FM/MT/2109  
Contact: Councillor Frank McNally  
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Date: uk 21 September 2023

Dear Minister

**Swimming Pool Provision  
in North Lanarkshire**

**Councillor Frank McNally**

Ward 16, Mossend and Holytown  
Civic Centre

Windmillhill Street Motherwell

ML1 1AB

[www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk](http://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk)

Maree Todd MSP  
Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport  
The Scottish Government

As you may be aware, North Lanarkshire Council has recently announced plans to reduce the number of leisure and community facilities in our towns and villages.

North Lanarkshire Council has had to endure savage cuts over the last 16 years, with more than £300 million cut from its budget. As you will know, the Scottish Government provides approximately 80 per cent of local government funding and it has been well documented by CoSLA and by the local authority chief financial officers that further cuts to this core grant are to be expected.

As has been evident in other local authorities, due to diminishing resources, North Lanarkshire is being forced to reduce the number of facilities within its Active and Creative Communities (ACC) portfolio. This includes the Sir Matt Busby Sports Complex in Bellshill, which includes a 25-metre pool, fitness centre, indoor court provision and other community space. The closure of this facility would be deeply detrimental to people in Bellshill, Mossend, Holytown, Thorniewood, and other towns and villages in the area, who make use of the facility on a daily basis. Figures show that footfall last year was over 350,000, making it one of the busiest in the authority. Sir Matt Busby is also home to the Bellshill Sharks ASC, which has been a steadfast local swimming club for generations of young people and the closure would leave the club's future uncertain. The removal of this centre will deprive thousands of local people, particularly children, of a much loved and well-used facility.

Swimming is an essential life skill, supports healthy lifestyles and can help to keep people safe when around water. Our swimming pools are also so often at the heart of our communities. You will be aware that Scottish Swimming's Save Our Pools campaign has highlighted the clear and present danger to pools across Scotland, due to reducing local government budgets and the energy costs associated with keeping pools functioning and leisure centres operating. They estimate that energy costs have increased from £500 million in 2019 to £1.2 billion in 2022.

As you will know, the UK Government has allocated £63 million for leisure centres and pools in England, which has resulted in additional Barnett Consequentials being passed to the Scottish Government. In response to a question from my colleague, Foysol Choudhury MSP on 7 June, Scottish Ministers have made clear that the Scottish Government has received these Consequentials. To date, Ministers have not taken steps to allocate these funds to councils.

The Scottish Government has stated that it will work with local government, sportscotland and Scottish Swimming to consider additional support but, again, there remains little clarity on this. There is an urgent need for action on this matter. The loss of a facility like Sir Matt Busby Sports Complex will have a lasting, detrimental, impact on the community. It will be especially challenging for those who use the swimming pool and fitness suite on a regular basis, including Bellshill Sharks ASC.

I would be grateful if you can advise if the Scottish Government will allocate these additional Consequentials to Scotland's 32 local authorities, including North Lanarkshire, what additional financial supports are being considered, and when the government will be in a position to announce this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank McNally', written in a cursive style.

**Frank McNally**  
**Scottish Labour Councillor for Mossend and Holytown**  
**North Lanarkshire Council**

## Scottish Government Response

T : 0300 244 4000

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Councillor Frank McNally  
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Our Reference: 202300377251

Your Reference: Swimming Pool Provision in North Lanarkshire

2 November 2023

Dear Councillor McNally,

Thank you for your email regarding the recent announcements by North Lanarkshire Council to close a number of sports and leisure facilities, including the Sir Matt Busby Sports Complex.

The Scottish Government places great importance on sports and leisure facilities, they are vital in supporting the physical and mental health of the nation and we recognise the significance of these facilities for the overall wellbeing of those who use them regularly.

We welcome the announcement by North Lanarkshire Council on 03 October 2023 that they will protect culture, sport and leisure facilities for the duration of the council term. However, we recognise that there remains concerns over the long term sustainability of sports and leisure facilities, in part due to the cost of living crisis. The Scottish Government have repeatedly called on the UK Government to use all the powers at its disposal to tackle this cost of living crisis and to provide appropriate energy bill relief to leisure facilities.

For its part, The Scottish Government are providing nearly £13.5 billion in the 2023-24 Local Government Settlement; increasing the resources available to Local Government by over £793m, which represents a real terms increase of £376m or 3 per cent.

As confirmed in the Autumn Budget Revision on 28 September 2023, all consequentials available from the UK Spring Budget have now been allocated, with the Local Government Settlement increasing by £254 million accordingly. This contrasts with the £6 million of consequentials allocated at the Spring Budget for swimming pools.

In 2023-24, North Lanarkshire Council will receive £779.7 million to fund local services, which equates to an extra £25.4 million to support vital day to day services or an additional 3.4 per cent compared to 2022-23. It is for democratically elected Councils to manage their own budgets and to make decisions on the priorities in their local communities.

It is vital that all partners at a local level work together to explore all avenues and approaches to ensure, where possible, that local clubs and communities have access to sport and leisure facilities.

Yours sincerely,

**Maree Todd MSP**

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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