

Presentation to the B&NES Council Meeting by the Warm Water Inclusive Swimming and Exercise Network– May 19th 2011

I am here today to remind you of resolutions laid down by three of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Panels earlier this year and a pledge made by the Council as far back as 2003 which has still not been addressed and ask that you take these into consideration when planning Council Leisure Services

I represent the Warm Water Inclusive Swimming & Exercise Network which was set up with the support of BANES Council in 2008. It grew out of the Remedial Swimming Consultative Group brought together by BANES Council after the closure of the small warm water pool at the Leisure Centre in 1996 followed by the capping of the temperature of the main pool at 30° in 2003. The council recognised at that time that some people needed water at a higher temperature and this Group looked into providing alternative solutions. However it proved impossible and the situation has not progressed since then.

Through the WWISE Network we are in contact with large numbers of people who are now not able to access a pool warm enough for them to be able to exercise and swim. These are people of all ages – children and adults – who are disabled or are living with long term health conditions such as arthritis, back & joint problems especially ones where pain is a major factor - and let's face it, this could be all of us as we get older. Exercising and swimming in warm water at 31 would help them to maintain their long term health and fitness, quite apart from allowing them to enjoy a recreational activity others take for granted. Given suitable exercise opportunities, they would also undoubtedly have less need of NHS services. Significantly, many of them have had courses of hydrotherapy and they are not able continue their exercises to maintain any improvement as they have to wait up to year to join a follow-up exercise session, with the result they deteriorate and need further treatment at a time when NHS hydrotherapy services at full stretch already.

They are not able to use to the local Sports Centre as their need is for water at 31 - 33°. The warm water pools that are in existence are either not available to the general public, are not accessible or are far too expensive for regular visits.

Proposals in the government White Paper "Healthy Lives, Healthy People" suggest that new developments in the funding of the NHS & Public Health will mean that there will be even greater emphasis on the provision of resources in the community to encourage people to lead healthier lives. A public access warm water pool would be an invaluable resource

As you are undoubtedly aware, there is currently a public consultation under way regarding the Recreation Ground which includes the land occupied by the Sports Centre. While this consultation is about the land use, at some point in the not too distant future it will become necessary to replace the current Sports Centre

Any planned redevelopment of the Sports Centre would provide BANES Council with a golden opportunity to incorporate a warm water pool that is affordable, accessible and available to all to ensure that these children and adults are no longer excluded from accessing their local sports centre. This will allow them to lead healthier lives, take control of maintaining their health & fitness, improve their quality of life and enjoy a recreational activity we all take for granted.

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