



**WEST LANCASHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL
WELLBEING & LEISURE
CONSULTATION**

OVERVIEW

West Lancashire Borough Council is committed to promoting Wellbeing and Leisure within West Lancashire.

The existing facilities at Nye Bevan and Park Pool centres are around 50 years old and at the end of their operational lives. The Council has been exploring options for the delivery of new Wellbeing and Leisure Hubs as part of the Council's commitment to foster inclusive and healthy communities whilst continuing to manage a resilient, financially strong Council.

Historically both Nye Bevan and Park Pool have operated at a loss and been subsidised by the Council out of public funds. The operating costs continue to increase and are now at a level that the Council are unable to sustain long term without it adversely impacting on the delivery of other services.

The buildings are in a poor condition and will need a large investment to keep them in use over the next few years. Due to the poor state of some of the infrastructure and equipment there is risk of failure in the near future should this investment not take place. Given the conditions of the buildings and the scale of investment required it would not be financially prudent to refurbish the buildings.

Previous consultation on the proposed new Wellbeing and Leisure hubs has shown support for the old centres to be closed and replaced with more modern facilities.

In recent years work has been undertaken to assess the viability of providing two new leisure hubs. It was anticipated that the current centres would be replaced with two new traditional build leisure centres but as a result of changes in government funding, increased interest rates and increases in build costs this approach is no longer viable.

The Council has therefore started to look at other options to deliver high quality wellbeing and leisure facilities within the borough. One option being considered is the development of above ground swimming pools. This option provides significant savings on time, cost and environmental impact compared to traditional in ground pools and a number of other Councils have delivered new facilities on this basis.

Whilst still providing high quality, financially sustainable leisure provision, above-ground swimming pools provide a significantly lower carbon footprint and can save hundreds of tons of materials compared to an in-ground pool. Delivering a lower carbon footprint build would help to meet the Council's corporate priorities whilst providing a facility that is more economically viable and easier and cheaper to maintain going forward.

CONSULTATION

We are consulting on whether Park Pool and Nye Bevan Leisure Centres should both be permanently closed. There are other potential options available such as partial closure, outsourcing or community transfer but these will not generate the level of savings required to be financially viable. Thorough consideration will be given to all the issues during the consultation period before a report comes back to Council to make a decision.

It has been our intention for some time that these centres should be closed and replaced with new modern facilities in nearby locations. However due to the immediate challenges facing these centres there is now a need to consider closing them before the new replacement centres can be built.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1) What is currently happening regarding Nye Bevan, Park Pool and Burscough centres?

As with many leisure providers the Council is being hit by big increases in energy bills and other pressures due to inflation. This puts the Council at financial risk. The Council needs to act now to provide sustainable wellbeing and leisure facilities going forward.

Unlike Burscough Wellbeing and Leisure Hub, Nye Bevan and Park Pool have reached the end of their operational lives and are no longer a financially sustainable option. Both buildings are in a poor condition and will need investment to keep them in use over the next few years. The Council believes that it is better to use this investment to go towards providing the new proposed wellbeing and leisure facilities.

Burscough is in much better condition and is more financially sustainable. The Council is currently investing £3.2m to refurbish the centre at Burscough to be able to continue to provide modern facilities and equipment equivalent to those offered by the private sector.

2) Is this problem really down to the financial cost of running the centres?

This coming year it is expected that the Council will have to spend around £0.5m more than budget on operating costs including energy and staffing costs. This is over and above the budgeted subsidy of £0.7m that is already required to operate the centres. The issue of repairing the building to bring it up to the required standard for operation also impacts on the decision.

3) What does this mean for Nye Bevan and Park Pool?

The condition and projected running costs of both centres continue to get worse and are putting all other leisure and wellbeing facilities at risk as well as negatively impacting on the Council's financial position. The Council is therefore considering whether it should close Nye Bevan and Park Pool while it explores the delivery of above ground wellbeing and leisure facilities.

As part of this consultation, the Council will be communicating with customers and people within West Lancashire about alternative provision provided by the Council, the private sector and in neighbouring authorities.

4) Why are Nye Bevan and Park Pool losing so much money?

Swimming generally is expensive to provide due to the energy and labour costs associated with it. The current facilities are outdated and in need of modernisation to bring them to the standard people expect and to compete with the private sector. Use of the centres is low and the income received does not cover the cost of running the centres. Several maintenance issues will also make the running of these centres more expensive going forward.

5) What will happen to the building and land?

The buildings and equipment have several issues which cannot be fixed easily without significant investment and it would not be financially prudent to refurbish the buildings. These issues also make operating the buildings difficult. It makes most economic sense to demolish the buildings with a view to exploring the provision of new facilities in the future.

6) What is the longer term vision for leisure?

The current plan includes provision of two new facilities to replace Nye Bevan and Park Pool and this would be a priority as soon as funding can be identified. This consultation will form part of the development of a long term vision for wellbeing and leisure facilities including the facilities offered at Burscough Wellbeing & Leisure Hub.

The Council has already started to look at other options to deliver modern wellbeing and leisure facilities with one option being to considered the development of above ground swimming pools. Options like these will allow the Council to provide high quality, economically viable, sustainable leisure facilities for the borough.

7) Where will people go in the short term?

It is anticipated that Burscough Wellbeing & Leisure Hub will be reopening in January 2025 providing modern facilities with an improved offering.

A full assessment of other options will be undertaken prior to any decision being made.

8) What about swimming lessons?

A full assessment of other options will be undertaken prior to any decision being made.

9) Will there be any job losses

The Council are working closely with the staff affected to minimise any job losses. We are committed to supporting the staff and are acting as quickly as possible to minimise the uncertainty the staff are currently facing.

10) Why not save money elsewhere to fund the centres?

The Council have had to deliver efficiencies and savings every year since 2010 and have managed large scale reductions in its overall budget due to cuts in its government funding. Analysis shows that the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) from Government 2006-2010 was £10.463m while the same RSG 2019-2024 was £850,000. This year the Council will be making further changes to cut costs to tackle inflation and funding reductions. Nye Bevan and Park Pool centres lose so much money and those costs are anticipated to increase, so it does not make economic sense for you as the tax payer to subsidise it to this amount.

11) Are there plans for other cuts to leisure facilities?

The Council is developing a clear action plan and at present there are no plans for reducing any other facilities.

12) What happens to users of the facilities?

The Council will be communicating with all users and stakeholders of the facilities over the coming days.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Your voice is important to us in forming a view on the impact of the closure of Nye Bevan and Park Pool in order to deliver two new wellbeing and leisure hubs. Your opinion matters both on the potential decision but also to allow us to minimise the impact of the decision as much as possible. Therefore, in light of the information above we would be grateful if you could answer the following:

1. **What is your interest in this survey?** Please tick all that apply:

West Lancs Resident

Uses or child uses Council leisure centres

Uses non-Council leisure facilities

Employee of Council leisure services

Represent a business, sports club, school, VCS or other organisation

Health & Wellbeing of residents

Work in the health sector

Concern for local community

Previous User

Swimming

Council Employee

Linked to leisure group or club

Councillor/Politician

Landlord

Use Non-Council facility

Another interest

2. **When was the last time you used a WLBC Leisure Facility?**

Within last 7 days

Within last 2 weeks

Within last month

Within last 3 months

Within last 6 months
Within last 12 months
Longer
Never

3. How often do you use Council leisure facilities?

More than one a week
Once a week
Once a fortnight
Monthly
Less

4. Please indicate which leisure centres you currently use or plan to use in the next 6 months

Park Pool
Nye Bevan
Burscough

5. Please indicate which facilities you plan to use

Swimming
Gym / fitness centre
Fitness club / class
Other – please specify

6. How do you travel to the leisure centre

Walk
Cycle
Public transport
Car
Other – please specify

7. If the two centres (Park Pool & Nye Bevan) were closed what steps (if any) would you take to access alternative leisure provision?

Do Nothing
Visit Burscough Wellbeing and Leisure hub
Visit a non-council leisure facility within the borough
Visit a leisure facility outside the borough
Participate in leisure activities in a different way

8. If you were to use a non-council leisure facility either within or outside the borough what venue would you chose?

9. What would be the biggest impact of having to use an alternative site?

None
Won't be able to access independently
Can't do specific sport or activity
Cost increase
Increase in Travel time – please state below how much longer it would take you to travel to your preferred alternative choice
Having to change the time you attend
Switch from walking or cycling to using a vehicle
Other

10. Would you use another Council Leisure Facility – if not, why not?

Not convenient/close
Doesn't provide the facilities I need
Don't like the venue
Cost
No public transport available
Would have to swap mode of transport
Would have to walk further to access public transport
Parking issues
Would have to change the time you attend
Couldn't access facilities independently
Other – please state

11. If you would chose not to attend an alternative venue either inside or outside the borough what would be the reason for your choice?

Not Convenient/Close
Accessibility Issues
Doesn't offer the equipment/facilities/classes needed
Opening times/slots unsuitable
No transport
Cost of Travel
Lack of parking
Too overcrowded
Hygiene / cleanliness
Dislike the other venues currently available

12. What impact would not being able to attend your usual leisure facility have on you, your family and your ability to access leisure service facilities?

13. What measures could the Council take to minimise the impact of the closure of the two leisure centres?

14. I agree/disagree with taking the steps to permanently close the existing facilities now in order to provide a full and thriving leisure service in the future?

Strongly Agree -> Strongly disagree

15. Why do you agree/disagree with the closure of the centres?

16. Do you have any alternative financially viable suggestions on how to ensure that we are able to continue to provide leisure services at the existing Ormskirk and Skelmersdale facilities in the future?

17. Equality Data Collection Questions

18. Details on how to return the survey.