

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

16 January 2014

Report by Directors of Education and Environment

NEILSTON LEISURE CENTRE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To advise Cabinet of the outcome of the option appraisal relating to Neilston Leisure Centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Note and comment on the outcome of the Consultants' study into future options for Neilston Leisure Centre,
- (ii) Agree that Option 2 is taken forward at this time for further development and consultation

BACKGROUND

3. In January 2013, Cabinet considered a report in relation to Neilston Leisure Centre. Cabinet agreed to commit funding to allow essential repairs to be undertaken, and authorised the Directors of Education and Environment to undertake detailed investigations and consultation over a range of longer term options for the Leisure Centre.

4. The essential repairs have now been undertaken. Competitive costs were received for the necessary works, meaning that some additional cosmetic/refurbishment work was able to be undertaken within the budget available. The Leisure Centre has now re-opened, and the feedback from users has been positive. In addition, the option appraisal in relation to longer term options has been undertaken by the Council's appointed Consultants (Knight, Kavanagh Page - KKP), and a summary of their final report is attached as an appendix.

REPORT

5. Cabinet will note from the KKP report that a range of options were considered. For clarification, closure was not an option which KKP was asked to consider based upon the previous Cabinet discussion.

6. KKP's option appraisal is summarised here:

Option	Summary	Assessment
1	Refurbish centre as existing	High cost of existing of development (estimated at £1.9 million) with limited opportunities for efficiencies or improved service delivery
2	Refurbish/remodel with library included	Relatively costly (estimated at £1.5 million) but with real operational savings and opportunities for improvements in services to the community
3	Refurbish with swimming pool filled in	Modest cost with significant operational savings. Loss of swimming pool time to immediate community and wider East Renfrewshire network. No proven case for large "dry" space.
4	Patch up and make do	Lower cost but could be regarded as a sticking plaster. Only postpones key decisions and risks future problems.
5	Cessation of service	Would result in savings but impact on local and wider community provision. Contrary to previous decision and recent level of investment.
6	New joint facility	High cost (estimated at £4 million) to deliver limited additional community value or additional savings over Option 2.

7. Having fully considered the range of options, KKP have recommended that the Council should consider Option 2 – which provides for a refurbished Leisure Centre with co-located Library and the creation of new, multi purpose space, at a cost estimated at this time to be in the region of £1.5 million.

8. At a stakeholders' meeting held in Glen Halls on 30 October 2013, attendees generally welcomed the Council's long term commitment towards the Leisure Centre. However, there was no consensus reached regarding a preferred option. Some favoured the recommended Option 2: others felt that fixing what was there would be adequate, without the need for more radical change. It was also suggested that there should be continuing consideration of a new-build facility, on an alternative site, within the context of wider discussion on Neilston regeneration.

9. Council Officers present at the meeting committed to a continued dialogue with the local community and other stakeholders to develop a detailed and well-founded proposal for the future of Neilston Leisure Centre. It was however made clear to attendees that there was no guarantee that capital funding would be available in the future to deliver any preferred option, as this would need to be considered within a challenging financial climate and balanced against other Council priorities.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

10. The works undertaken in Neilston Leisure Centre have all been completed within the budget available. Costed options are included in paragraph 6 above and the more detailed report in Appendix 1. A preferred option will need to be considered within the context of the potential capital cost, against any possible revenue savings generated through the co-location of services. These issues will be set out fully in a capital programme submission (CPA).

CONSULTATION

11. Consultation took place with stakeholders during the KKP study. In addition, KKP and Council Officers consulted with the local community during the public meeting held on 30 October 2013. This consultation will continue as the preferred option is considered in more detail.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

12. This report has been prepared following good partnership working between officers from within Education and Environment.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

13. There are no staffing, sustainability, IT, equality or other implications associated with this report.

CONCLUSION

14. From the first report on Neilston Leisure Centre by Thomas & Adamson it was apparent that “do nothing” was not an option. The Council has invested substantially in the centre but it is also apparent that this was sufficient to enable the centre to re-open: it does not by itself secure its future in the long-term.

15. The KKP report identifies that refurbishing the centre as existing is a viable option but that it does not deliver either revenue budget reduction or improvement in services to the community. These would be achieved by Option 2: refurbish with the library being co-located. Whilst more detailed work and engagement is needed, KKP suggest that the costs of this option would be lower than those of Option 1.

16. There is the further option of a new build facility within the village. As the KKP study indicates this would be a relatively high cost option. The consultants’ estimate is that this would reduce net operating costs by a further £5000 whilst incurring more than twice the capital cost of Option 2. It is not clear that it would provide a marked increase in services when compared with that option.

17. It is therefore recommended that Option 2 is taken forward as the preferred option, in principle at this time, and subject to further detailed work and consultation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

- I. Note and comment on the outcome of the Consultants' study into future options for Neilston Leisure Centre,
- II. Agree that Option 2 is taken forward at this time for further development and consultation

Director of Education/Director of Environment

Further information can be obtained from: Ken McKinlay, Head of Education Services on 0141 577 3103 or Iain Maclean, Head of Environment on 0141 577 3720

Convener contact details

Councillor Mary Montague
(Convener for Community Services & Community Safety)

Office: 0141 577 3108

Councillor Tony Buchanan
(Convener for Infrastructure and Sustainable Growth)

Home: 0141 577 5717
Office: 0141 577 3107/8

December 2013

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

**NEILSTON LEISURE CENTRE; EVALUATION OF
DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS**

DRAFT REPORT

OCTOBER 2013

Integrity, Innovation, Inspiration

1-2 Frecheville Court ◀ off Knowsley Street ◀ Bury BL9 0UF
T 0161 764 7040 ◀ **F** 0161 764 7490 ◀ **E** mail@kcp.co.uk ◀ **www.kkp.co.uk**



**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
NEILSTON LEISURE CENTRE: EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT
OPTIONS**

Quality assurance	Name	Date
Report origination	David McHendry	26.7.13
Quality control	Louise Wright	29.7.13
Client comments		
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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL NEILSTON LEISURE CENTRE: EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

INTRODUCTION

This is the draft report by Knight Kavanagh and Page (KKP) to deliver an evaluation of the development options for Neilston Leisure Centre. This study builds on the previous technical feasibility and options appraisal undertaken by Thomas and Adamson. This study considers the medium to longer term options following the facility being re-opened and operational from August 2013.

This study considers the following scope of work as detailed within the Council's brief, which includes:

- ◀ An appraisal of the options identified within the Thomas and Adamson study and where appropriate consideration is given to alternative options
- ◀ Working alongside the Council's technical team to articulate visual concepts for each of the proposed options
- ◀ Working alongside the Council's technical team to identify indicative construction cost of each option
- ◀ A detailed 5 year revenue business plan for each of the options
- ◀ Clear recommendations on the best fit option for the development of the facility.

The above study scope has been informed by consultation with interested members of the public, community organisations, stakeholders council officers and residents.

Current position

The current position with regards Neilston LC is that the facility has been closed since August 2012. The immediate cause of the closure was concerns over the swimming pool circulation system and the impact this had on water quality and the health and safety of swimmers. However, there were other major repairs required to the facility and underlying concerns over the condition of the building. At that time the Council decided that the building should remain closed until a full appraisal could be carried out.

The Council commissioned Thomas and Adamson, who confirmed that a high volume of maintenance work was needed to bring the facility up to operational standard and that "doing nothing" was not an option. However, it was also identified that there were no structural issues which threatened the future of the building.

Thomas and Adamson identified that the cost of maintenance work required (in a phased programme) was in excess of £1 million. The scale of this investment caused the Council to ask if there are alternative options which would provide significantly greater benefits and better value to the community.

The study identified a long list of options from which the Council's Cabinet approved a short list for further development. However, in addition to this the Cabinet also agreed a package of funding in 2013/14 (circa £300,000) which will deal with the immediate major maintenance issues and secure the operation of the centre in the short- to medium-term.

It is clear that this funding alone will not be sufficient to resolve the many issues facing the centre. That is, the facility condition is such that it requires significant investment in order to bring it up to modern day standards; estimated to be circa £2 million by Thomas

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and Adamson. The Cabinet rejected the option of closing the facility and ceasing the provision of swimming in Neilston, but identified the following options for further development:

- ◀ Refurbished leisure centre as existing;
- ◀ Refurbished leisure centre with a co-located library
- ◀ Refurbished leisure centre with the swimming pool filled in.

As part of this study the Council is also seeking to ascertain if there are any other options that need to be considered as part of the medium to longer term strategy for the facility.

Therefore, this study does not seek to reiterate the background information on the facility and its local community, as these have been clearly stated within the previous reports. However, this report does seek to provide additional context to the area and the profile of sport and physical activity within it.

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NEILSTON LEISURE CENTRE: EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

BACKGROUND

Neilston Leisure Centre was built in 1976 and is located within the centre of Neilston, adjacent to the Main Street. The leisure centre is also within close proximity to the local library, which is housed in a building of a similar age and design. The facility mix includes:

- ◀ 25 meter pool
- ◀ Changing rooms
- ◀ 2 x Squash courts
- ◀ Disused sauna facility (which houses gym equipment)

The Thomas Adamson report highlighted that the population of the Neilston, Uplawmoor and Newton Mearns North political boundary area has reduced by 5% in the 10 years to 2011. Their analysis identified that key changes have taken place in a number of age bands, namely:

- ◀ The 0 – 19 year old age groups have shown a significant reduction in population base.
- ◀ A similar statement can be made for the 30 – 49 age groups.
- ◀ The older age groups (55+) have shown a significant increase in population base across the area.

Therefore, it is clear that the demographic profile changes which have taken place since 2001 will have had an impact on the type, frequency and intensity of use of the leisure Centre over recent years. Examples of this could include the following:

- ◀ Although the older population has less constraints on its time it is highly price sensitive and in many circumstances qualify for discretionary pricing from East Renfrewshire Council. This in turn means reduced income.
- ◀ A reduction in the number of young people has an impact on local demand for swimming lessons and general swimming among this age group.
- ◀ A reduction in the number of 30 – 49 age group has an impact on local demand for family swimming and fitness based activities. In some circumstances this age group are less likely than the 55+ are group to qualify for discretionary pricing.

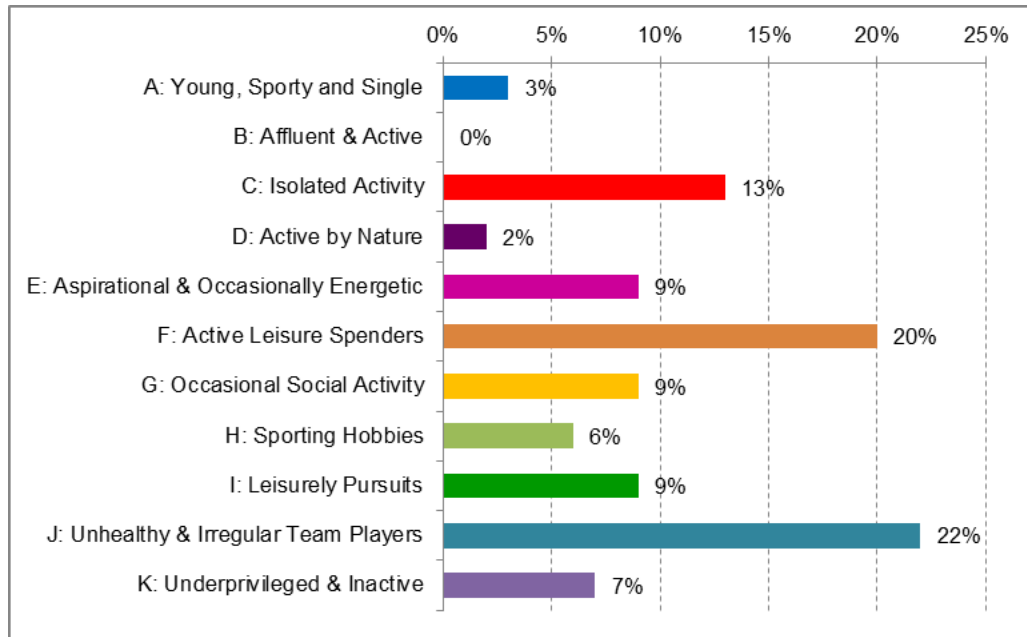
Active Scotland analysis

The Active Scotland Household Targeting Tool is based on key national surveys including the Scottish Household Survey, Scottish Health Survey and Scottish Natural Heritage's Scottish Recreation Survey and seeks to provide a holistic approach to developing physical activity programmes for key communities. It was created in partnership with sportscotland, NHS Health Scotland, Scottish Government and Scottish Natural Heritage.

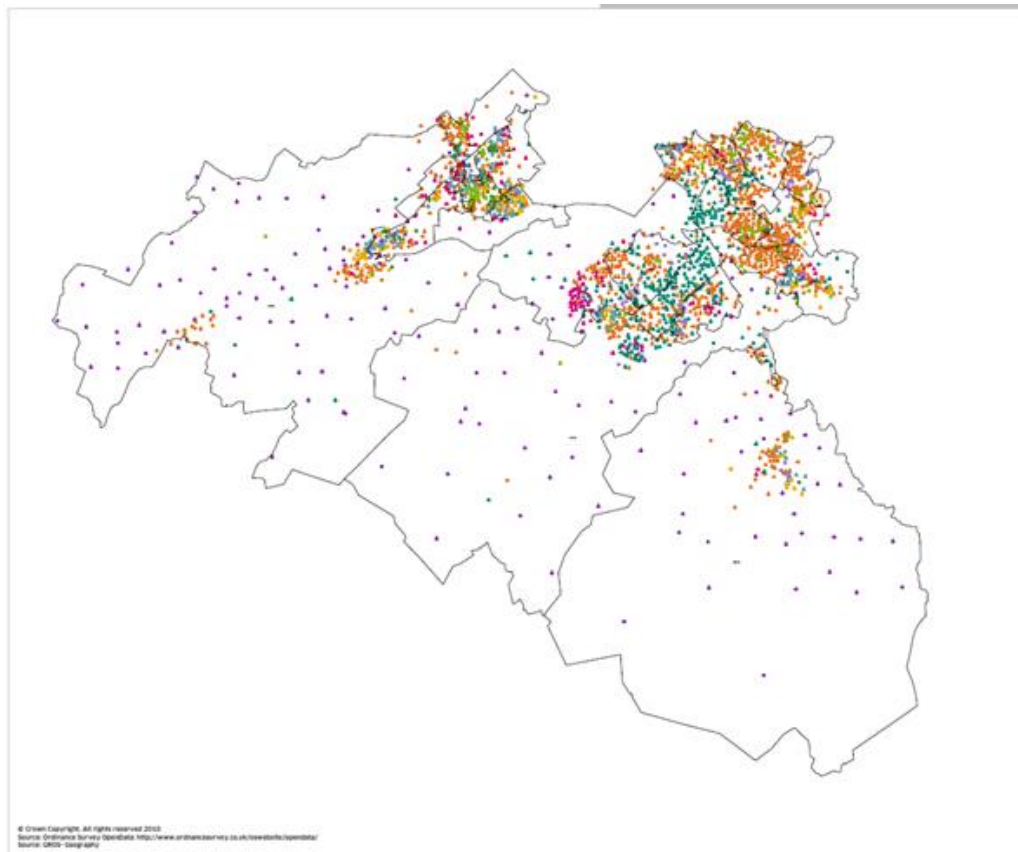
Within this analysis **sportscotland** has identified that Neilston LC is located within the political ward of North Neilston and West Arthurlie (even though ward boundaries may have changed the profile of the Neilston Community is still relevant). With this in mind the profile of East Renfrew is characterised as having a mix of active residents in some parts of the district alongside key pockets of unhealthy and irregular or non-participants. This is outlined in the following table and map.

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East Renfrewshire segment profile



East Renfrewshire – dot map of segments



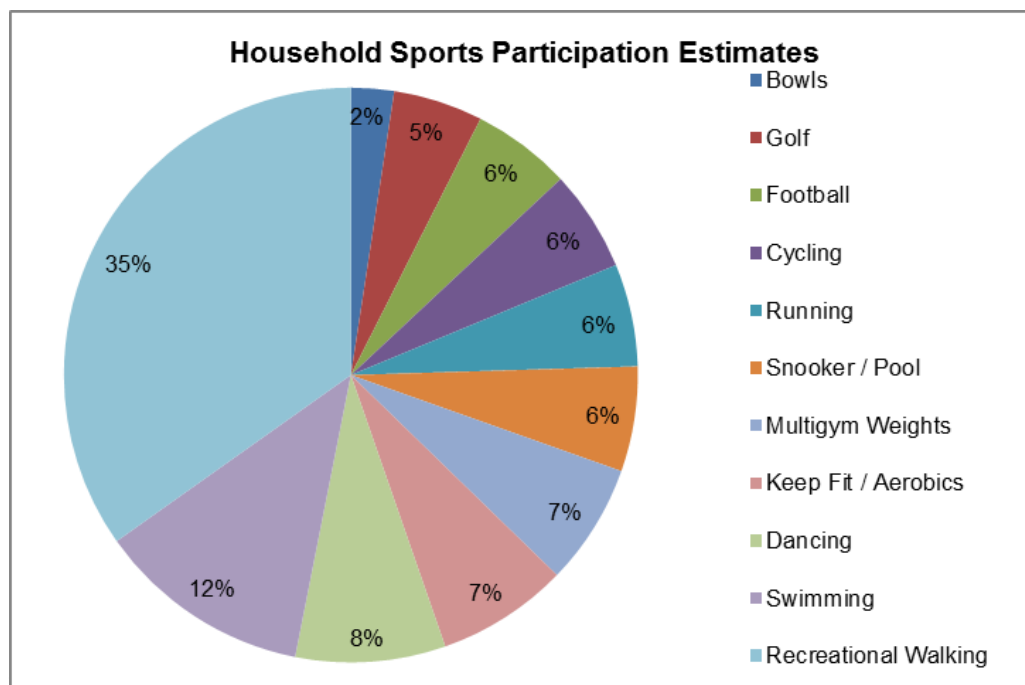
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More detailed analysis of the North Neilston and West Arthurlie political ward provides an indication of the key activity types that local residents participate in. The analysis identifies that recreational walking is the primary source of activity that residents participate in. This potentially reflects the rural nature of Neilston, the low cost of the activity and also the changing age profile of the community (i.e. a significant increase in older age residents).

The second most popular activity is swimming. This is important in that it is obviously a popular activity among local residents and potentially accounts for the importance residents have given to protecting a local resource. It is also significant for some residents in that the proximity of the pool will impact on their ability to access it (i.e. there may be barriers to accessing Barrhead SC as an alternative – car ownership, public transport, etc)

After swimming there is a range of dance and fitness based activities which are, again, significant in the context of what might be developed at the facility.

North Neilston and West Arthurlie – participation estimates



The above participation estimates demonstrate that swimming and dance are important activities that require a physical asset to be accessible to the local community. The obvious challenge for East Renfrewshire Council is the degree to which 'accessible' requires the facility to be located in the community. Given that the Council has made the decision not to close the facility there is the perception that these are one in the same.

The main activity of recreational walking alongside other less popular activities such as cycling and running do not necessarily require a physical asset to be provided for them. However, it is also important to consider that any operator of an indoor facility could and should be maximising the impact of these outdoor activities by providing a meeting point or showering facility for some of these types of activities. This not only increases the value and significance of the asset, but also provides an opportunity for cross-selling of activities.

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Although the Active Scotland Household targeting tool is very useful in determining potential trends within a specific area it is not the only sources of information that should be used to determine the importance of activities or key sports facilities within a particular community. It should be used as part of a broader field of information which includes consultation, analysis of actual usage and local strategic priorities.

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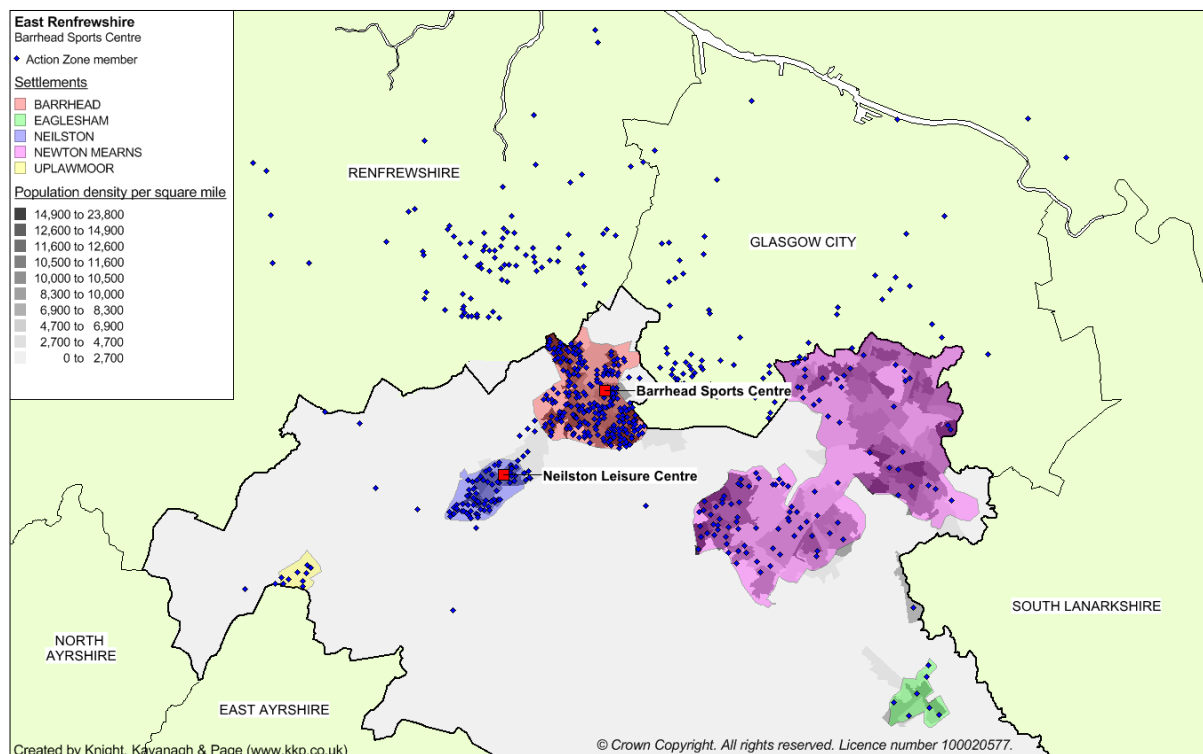
Analysis of local membership

In assessing the need for facilities in Neilston it is important to assess this within the context of its closest major facility, namely Barrhead Sport Centre. Barrhead SC is approximately 2 miles from Neilston. It is important to note that although the distance between both communities is fairly short, the topography is such that it is not reasonable to expect residents to walk between the two. Therefore, there is a reliance on personal or public transport.

The following maps and analysis has been generated from the actual usage of Barrhead SC for the period 1st February to 31st April 2013. Although this is during the period in which Neilston LC was closed it is useful to note the degree to which residents are travelling to access facilities.

Barrhead Sports Centre – Action Zone membership

Action Zone is the Council's main health and fitness membership scheme. These members will be using the fitness suite facility at Barrhead SC and will have signed up to a monthly direct debit programme. Historically, Barrhead SC has had the largest fitness membership of all the Council's facilities and as can be seen from the map it has its main concentration in Barrhead, but also pulls from a wide catchment.



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Barrhead SC - Action Zone membership

Settlement	Female	Male	Total
Barrhead	349	355	704
Eaglesham	6	5	11
Neilston	74	85	159
Newton Mearns	69	55	124
Uplawmoor	13	16	29
Not in settlement	150	155	305
Not mapped	20	13	33
Total	681	684	1,365

Almost 160 residents in Neilston are members of the Barrhead SC fitness suite. These residents are clearly attracted by the large scale fitness provision rather than, what can be described as the poor quality, piecemeal offer that was available at Neilston LC.

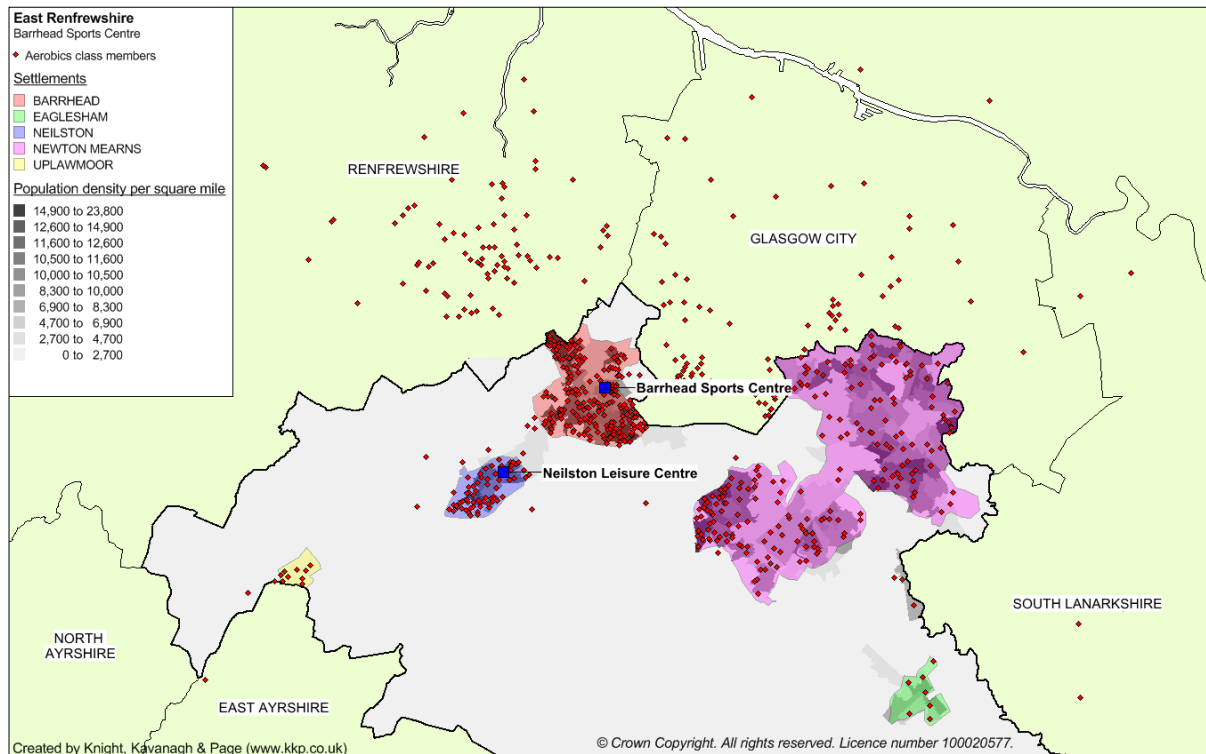
Barrhead SC – usage profile

This section considers the wider usage of Barrhead sports centre and picks up on general pay and play users (through the membership card) as opposed to just those direct debit members. Given that the Council operates a membership card where it tries to collect information on all users, this is very useful in this circumstance for determining where users of different types of activities come from. The following table identifies the four key activities analysed as part of this and importantly where users travel from to access the service. Our analysis focuses primarily on those residents from Neilston.

Settlement	Aerobics classes	Dry Sports	Pool	Swimming lessons
BARRHEAD	465	503	837	186
EAGLESHAM	8	6	18	3
NEILSTON	114	86	220	33
NEWTON MEARNNS	247	207	408	138
UPLAWMOOR	16	12	22	8
Not in settlement	274	350	696	228
Not mapped	54	58	114	41
Total	1,178	1,222	2,315	637

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Barrhead Sports Centre – Aerobics class members

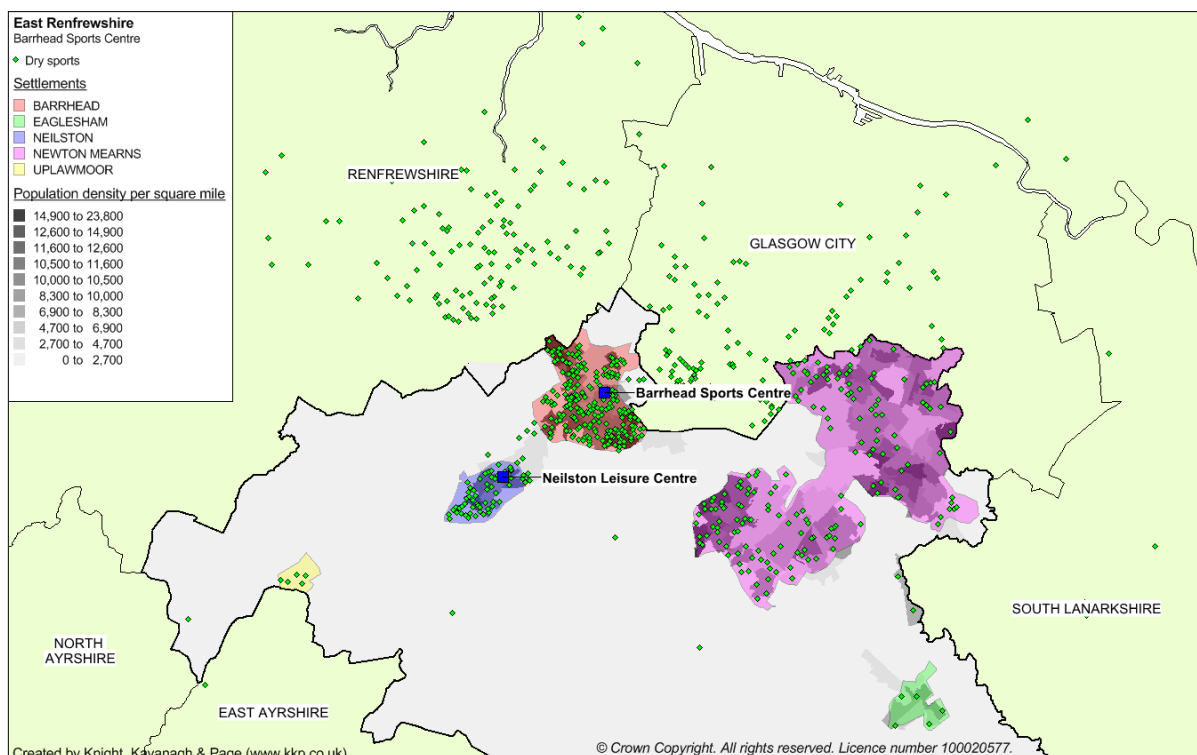


114 Neilston residents accessed a range of aerobics programmes at Barrhead SC in the three month period. These sessions were not available at Neilston, therefore there was no issue related to the closure of the facility.

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Barrhead Sports Centre – dry sports activities

86 residents accessed a range of dry sports activities (e.g. badminton, squash, 5-a-side football, etc) at Barrhead SC in the three month period. Similarly, these sessions were not available at Neilston, therefore there was no issue related to the closure of the facility.



However, if we consider swimming lessons and general swims; residents participating in these activities have clearly been impacted upon as a result of the closure of Neilston LC. 220 residents used Barrhead SC for general swimming while 33 residents had to undertake swimming lessons there as opposed to at Neilston LC.

Without having the same data sets for the three month period prior to the closure of Neilston LC it is difficult to assess the true impact of the closure of the pool on local residents. However, the above data and following maps demonstrate that from a (North Neilston and West Arthurlie) ward population of circa 3,700, 5.9% of the residents have travelled to Barrhead to use the swimming pool. This is half of the figure highlighted in the household sports participation estimates.

Further analysis will need to be undertaken to assess if sufficient number of residents are accessing swimming at Barrhead SC or if there has been a negative impact on participation locally within the area.

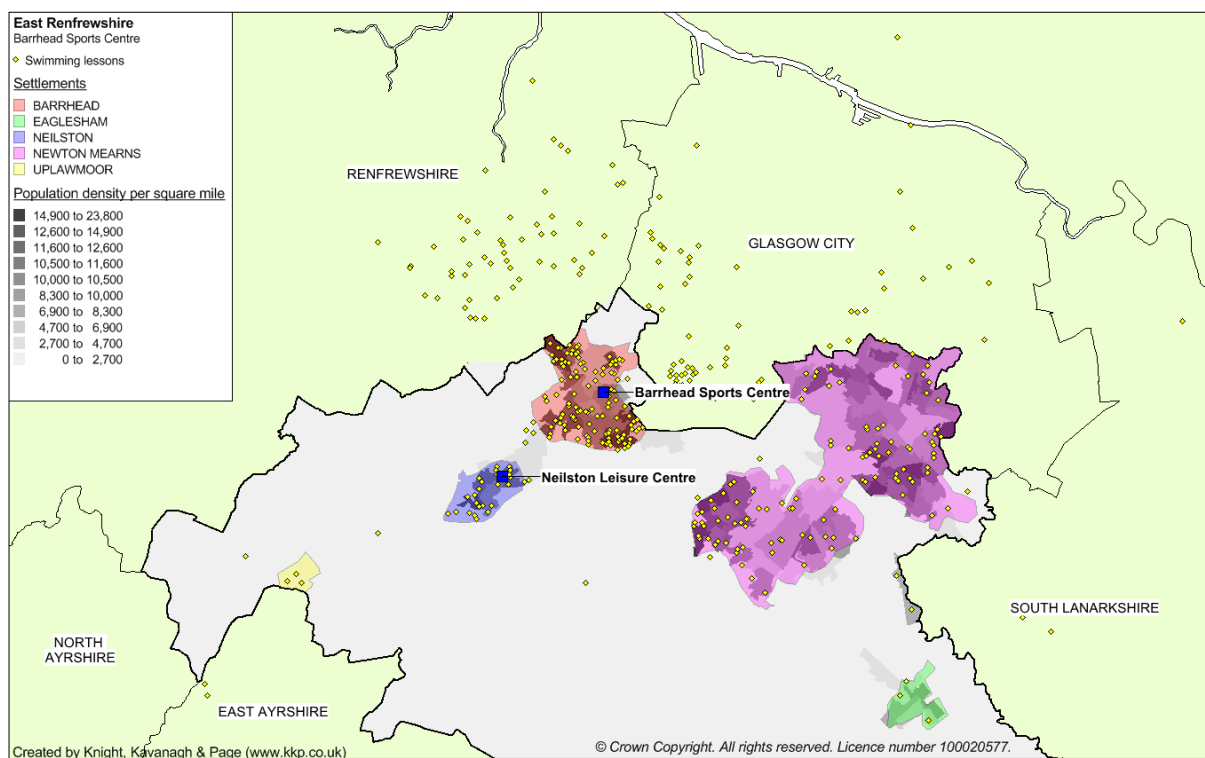
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The Council has undertaken a review of the usage of pools across the District for the years 2010/11 and 2011/12 which indicates that swimming in ERC was down by circa 11% over the period. This is similar to Neilston's share of the total swimming use across the District which potentially reinforces that the temporary closure of the facility has had a negative impact on participation levels. However, it is unclear if this is participation by Neilston residents.

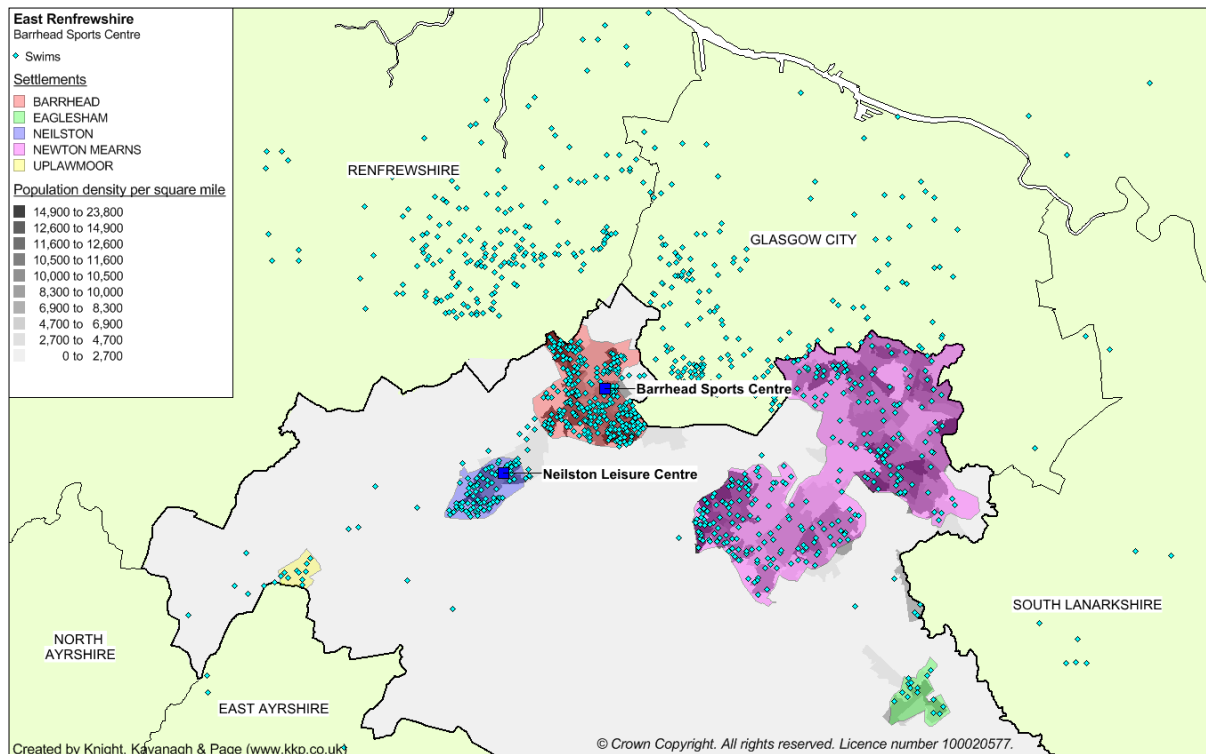
The following maps outline the pull of Barrhead SC in relation to swimming and swimming lessons and identified the number of residents from Neilston and beyond who use the facility.

Barrhead Sports Centre – Swimming lessons



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Barrhead Sports Centre – Swims



Summary

It is clear that the age and demographic (socio-economic) profile of Neilston has an impact not only on the sport and physical activities undertaken within the area, but also the financial sustainability of facilities. An example of this is that there is a greater proportion of the local population that qualify for discretionary pricing given their age. The impact of Neilston closing for approximately a year is difficult to determine fully, but it would appear that it has had a negative impact on participation levels across the District and within Neilston itself.

Another important consideration is the degree to which the key facilities such as health and fitness and group fitness studios attract residents from Neilston to Barrhead. Although it may not be feasible to replicate facilities like these in Neilston there is a need to provide some form of activity space that can accommodate some of this activity or to enable the management team to provide complementary activities that Barrhead does not currently offer.

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CONSULTATION

Consultation was conducted with a range of key stakeholders and community representatives. Specific consultation was undertaken with the pool user group and the Neilston Development Trust as key representatives of 'community opinion'. However it is fair to say that these two organisations have very different perspectives on the requirements within the community. The key focus for the consultation was to determine the following:

- ◀ Need within the community wider aspiration.
- ◀ Programming requirements in order to increase intensity of use and minimise ongoing cost.
- ◀ The wider options for facility redevelopment or replacement.
- ◀ Any challenges that may need to be overcome in relation to the options.
- ◀ The advantages and disadvantages of the range of options available to the Council.

The key outcome of the consultation can be summarised as follows:

Swimming

- ◀ Consultees identified that there is a need for continued swimming provision in Neilston. This in part is due to the limited public transport between the two areas and the topography of the area. The closure of the pool has also impacted upon the Council's ability to meet levels of demand for swimming lessons at its other pools.
- ◀ It was identified that there needs to be clarity about opening times at the facility as this has not always been the case in the past.
- ◀ It was also identified that communication was not always as it should have been and that there can often be additional use programmed in at public swimming times without prior notice (e.g. staff training).
- ◀ It is recognised that the pool needs to be programmed and that it is not appropriate to have significant times of 'general public use'.
- ◀ A review of the full programme should potentially be undertaken prior to the pool re-opening to ensure that it meets the needs of the widest possible users rather than simply reverting to the previous programme.
- ◀ Consultees identified that 'not enough is made of the station' and its proximity to the pool; however, the station does not link to Barrhead which is Neilston's closest main area for wider services (e.g. shops, health, secondary schools, etc).
- ◀ It is recognised that it is not just the internal infrastructure of the leisure centre that requires attention, it was also noted that the quality and size of parking is an issue; especially when there are activities on at the Glen Halls.

Fitness provision

- ◀ It was identified that the community in Neilston is not sufficiently large enough to justify a bespoke health and fitness facility.
- ◀ If an area for fitness is developed within the facility then it needs to be multi-functional and accommodate a wide range of uses.
- ◀ Any fitness area needs to be complementary to Barrhead SC and not compete with it. This will underwrite the significance of the facility and attract users up from Barrhead to Neilston.

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- ◀ The opportunity exists to develop a functional training facility at Neilston; however this will have to be programmed (session based programme) and staffed at key times.
- ◀ A multi-functional training facility can also accommodate a range of health based programmes that the Council currently delivers in its 'be active' programme; therefore this could be extended to include sessions at Neilston.
- ◀ The use of Glen Halls for fitness activities was also raised during the consultation process. This could be used for some activities, but may not be viewed as complementary to existing programmes. Additionally the facility does not have changing facilities available to customers.

Library provision

- ◀ It has been identified that Library provision is changing and that they are now less 'book storage areas' and more 'information centres'. This is reinforced by the fact that 57% of members are active borrowers; with the other members accessing different services such as music, internet and information services.
- ◀ The size of library building required to accommodate the needs of the Neilston community is predicted to be significantly smaller than the current library, although it is recognised that the facility mix needs to be finalised.
- ◀ IT provision is important within any modern library. In East Renfrewshire IT is particularly important in dealing with Welfare Reform issues.
- ◀ Libraries are also accommodating a range of different spaces and being used for a wider range of interactive services such as reading group sessions, meetings, workshops and outreach programmes.
- ◀ The Library service in East Renfrewshire has also altered its staffing structure and uses a casual pool of library staff to deliver a range of sessions such as childrens' reading groups etc.
- ◀ The service is also proposing that Library staff (at the Barrhead Hub) will be multi-functional and able to provide other services.....At Neilston this could include the development of a dual role where a single member of staff hires books and sells swimming admissions.

Youth provision

- ◀ Consultation identified the need to develop provision for young people in the Neilston area. This in part is borne out by the fact that youth disturbance was previously an issue for the library.
- ◀ It was not identified that a bespoke youth centre is required; however there is the need for a space which can accommodate youth activities.
- ◀ There was general agreement that the space for youth activities could also be the multi-functional space.

Ancillary provision

- ◀ Some consultees identified the need for a café facility; however it is felt that there will not be the throughput to justify this or make it financially viable. Therefore, good quality vending should be considered.
- ◀ Some consultees identified that there should be separate male and female changing facilities and that a changing village should be discouraged. It should be noted that a

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changing village provides greater flexibility for a wider range of users (e.g. schools, families and clubs) and if investment extends this far, it should be considered.

- ◀ It was identified that the operational practice at the facility could potentially be improved. Any new approach must focus on a flexible method of working for all activity areas and not just the pool.
- ◀ The leisure centre should be a hub for a wider range of activities not just those it directly provides.

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Community aspiration

- ◀ It is worth noting that there appears to be 'local sensitivity' around the wider aspirations for the community; therefore there may be a need to consider how future plans for Neilston LC are communicated to the wider community.
- ◀ Neilston Development Trust identified that community facilities (and the leisure centre in particular) are a key part of its vision for the town through its 'renewed social infrastructure' theme.
- ◀ Neilston will benefit financially (circa £10 million over 20 years) from a wind farm joint venture; however, it is not envisaged that this funding could go towards the development of a new or refurbished leisure centre. The aspiration is that the funding will pump prime outcome based initiatives or future funding bids.
- ◀ The co-location of services is a key aspiration of the Council as it has the potential to reduce the number of assets in the area and associated running costs. Consultees recognised this and agreed that it is a sensible approach.

Summary

It was clear from the range of consultation meetings undertaken that the following summary can be identified:

- ◀ There is a continued need for the leisure centre (swimming pool) in the town and its closure over the last year has had an impact on people's participation.
- ◀ A co-located option for a range of services is a sensible approach.
- ◀ There is no great aspiration for a new facility; as long as the existing is improved and fully operational.
- ◀ There is a need for youth provision in the area.
- ◀ Given their proximity, there is a need for Neilston leisure facilities to complement those at Barrhead rather than being in competition with them. Where possible, if the facility can offer something slightly different this could attract users from Barrhead as well as Neilston and enable the service to expand its offer to residents.

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OPTIONS APPRAISAL

As outlined in the brief, this report provides an overview of the following options:

- ◀ Refurbished leisure centre as existing
- ◀ Refurbished leisure centre with a co-located library
- ◀ Refurbished leisure centre with the swimming pool filled in.

In addition to the above, in order to provide the Council with a robust appraisal, it is incumbent on KKP to consider a range of other options including

- ◀ Patch up and make do
- ◀ Build a new joint leisure facility and library on an alternative site
- ◀ Cessation of the service

The advantages and disadvantages of this above options alongside the revenue impact are outlined below:

Option 1 - Refurbished leisure centre as existing

The likely cost of this development would be in the region of £1,950,000 – Thomas and Adamson study. It is unlikely that this option would deliver significant savings to the Council as there would be minimum investment in public areas in order to change the income profile of the facility.

Within this option it is proposed to develop the squash courts into a multi-functional area. Although this will provide a different facility, it will not be significantly different that it will radically change the revenue profile. This is in part due to the fact that the Council has already gone through a process of reducing hours and cutting costs at the facility, but where possible minimising income loss. Added to this, there is no getting away from the fact that the population density in the area will not facilitate a significant change to the revenue profile.

In summary, this option is expected to generate a £15,000 per annum improvement in the financial performance of the facility. It is anticipated that there will be improvements in general admissions and fitness income and efficiencies in utilities and maintenance costs.

This does not deliver any efficiencies for the library service which will still remain in its existing building and be subject to future maintenance costs.

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Option 2 - Refurbished leisure centre with a co-located library

The focus for this investment is to redevelop the leisure centre and to relocate the library into the centre. Discussions with the Library service indicate that this would be feasible given the changing needs of a modern library service. That is, there is less space required for book storage but more use of internet terminals and information services. Initial discussions with the Library Services indicates that the current library is 312m² and there is a need for circa 200m² of library space for the local population. Effective use of the Leisure Centre would create circa 250m² of space for a library and associated meeting spaces.

In KKP's opinion the following facility mix and associated changes should be provided to the existing leisure centre:

- ◀ Redevelop swimming pool.
- ◀ Create a changing village with appropriate family and disabled changing.
- ◀ Create a new library facility within the squash court and gym area; with a mezzanine floor over one squash court area to maximise space.
- ◀ Create a multi-purpose room in the gym area, suitable for youth activities and wider fitness activities.
- ◀ Develop a new entrance to the facility at the side of the facility.
- ◀ Redevelop the frontage of the facility to make it more attractive.
- ◀ Create a single point of sale for the library and leisure centre.

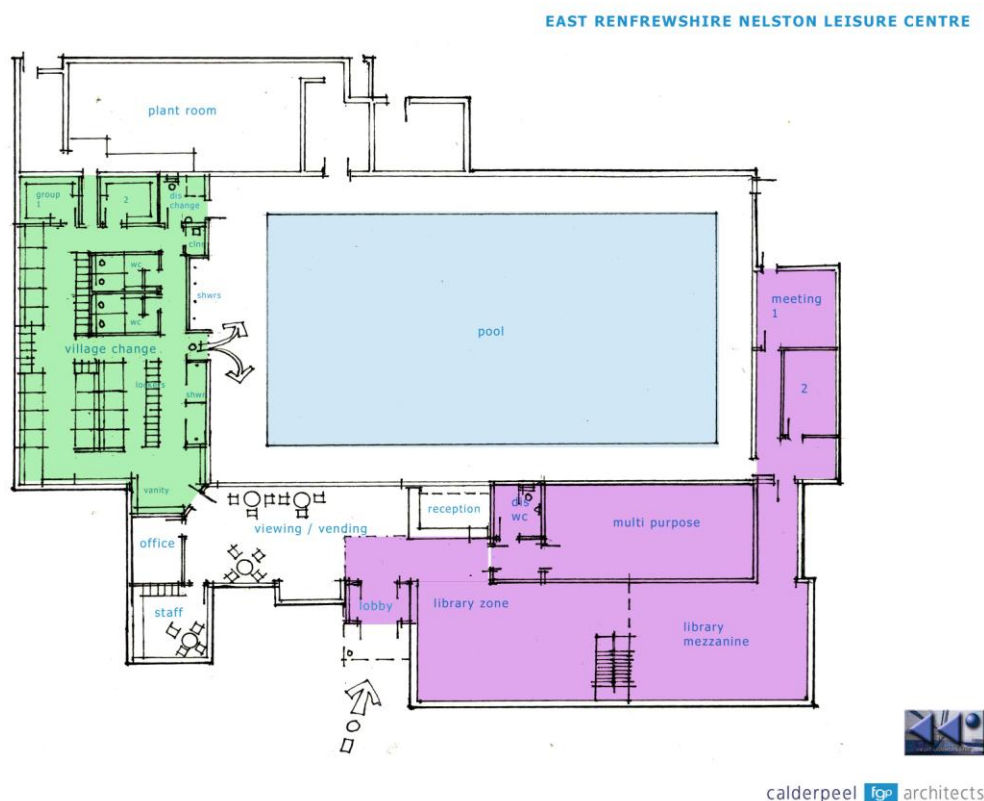
Ideally the above can be achieved within the existing building footprint; by providing a mezzanine floor to the existing squash court area. This in turn would create circa 200m² of core library space and 50m² of meeting room space.

This option is different from the Thomas and Adamson specified option 3 in that it seeks to provide all facilities within the existing footprint of the building. Therefore, there will be no extension to the facilities and the multi-purpose facilities will be contained within existing rooms.

The following plan shows the potential layout of the facility:

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KKP's proposed layout of the facility



The above plan has been costed by the Council and in order to deliver the above changes to the facility it is estimated to require £855,000. In addition to the improvement cost there will also be a need to invest circa £275,000 to address the backlog maintenance issues over the next 5 years.

This option would deliver a greater degree of savings on the understanding that the following operational approach is undertaken:

- ◀ A single management and operational structure for the facility.
- ◀ Front line staff (e.g. receptionists) are trained in hiring library books and assisting people to find information as well as in serving swimming customers.
- ◀ That the service implements an online payment or direct debit payment system for swimming lessons in order to minimise pressure on reception/library staff.
- ◀ An open planned and zoned facility is created which utilises all available space.

This option is likely to deliver at least £60,000 per annum saving on both facilities. This is based on the following key assumptions:

- ◀ £30,000 saving is achieved from the £55,000 staff costs at the library.
- ◀ £15,000 saving is achieved on property costs as a result of a single facility.
- ◀ Efficiencies in utilities and some maintenance costs are achieved.

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- ◀ Although not significant because of the population density, some increases in income are achieved by this option.
- ◀ Although the library is in relatively good condition there is also likely to be a saving of circa £100,000 on additional maintenance costs over the next 10 years (£40,000 of which is required in the next 5 years).

Although £60,000 per annum savings in the context of over £1.13 million investment does not appear good value for money; this option also has other added benefits such as:

- ◀ The flexible approach to service delivery results in a greatly extended library service for the Neilston community.
- ◀ It provides a multi-purpose facility which can be used by young people and youth services colleagues.

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Option 3 - Refurbished leisure centre with the swimming pool filled in.

This option is considered within the context of continuing to provide a leisure facility in Neilston, but in the perspective of taking out the swimming pool which is the costly element of the facility. This option does not consider a co-located library within its mix.

From consultation this option appears passive in its approach. That is, the Council does not have a vision of what the facility will include within what is the pool area. Therefore, this appears to be a cost cutting approach rather than an approach to expand sport and physical activity within the community.

The options for the use of the swimming pool area includes:

- ◀ Activity hall, with limited uses (e.g. 5-a-side)
- ◀ Soft play facility for younger children

Although the above options provide an alternative facility to the pool, the result will have a negative impact on swimming across the district:

- ◀ Limits access to swimming lessons for young people
- ◀ Limits access to swimming facilities for older people in Neilston.
- ◀ Limits the availability of pool time for Ren 96 swimming team and has a knock on effect on other pools.

The likely cost of this option is unknown, but it would be estimated to be less than the cost of Option 1. That is, there would be no cost associated with the pool circulation and heating system, or the extensive air handling units. Additionally, changing room refurbishments would be less costly given it would be a dry facility.

This option is likely to deliver at least £160,000 per annum saving on the operation of the current leisure centre. This is based on the following key assumptions:

- ◀ Significant savings on staff costs, estimated to be in the region of over £200,000 per annum
- ◀ £60,000 savings on property costs as a result of taking out the pool i.e. utilities and maintenance costs.
- ◀ However, there would also be changes to the income profile, with increases in some areas and substantial reductions in others; resulting in a net reduction in income of circa £112,000.

Although £160,000 per annum savings in the context of under £2 million investment appears to be good value for money; it is felt that the negative aspects of this option far outweigh the financial benefits. This is reinforced by the Council's commitment to get the pool operational and to invest over £300,000 in achieving this. It would be a difficult decision for the Council to write off this investment by filling in the pool and making Neilston a dryside facility.

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Option 4 – Patch up and make do

This option is considered within the context of continuing to provide the leisure facility as it currently stands and undertaking the minimum investment to keep it open. This option does not consider any improvement to the centre and solely seeks to maintain it as a functioning building. This option does not consider a co-located library within its mix.

Consultation with the pool user group identified a degree of frustration with the Council and a desire to get the pool open for use. The potential exists for this desire to get the pool open to be misinterpreted as an acceptance of the current poor condition of the facility as acceptable. This is clearly not the case and if this approach was taken it would add fuel to the perception that 'Neilston does not receive its fair share of investment'.

The Council is currently investing circa £350,000 to get the facility open. In addition to this initial investment there is likely to be another £275,000 to address backlog maintenance priorities over the next 3-7 years. This will not result in any public facing or cosmetic improvement to the facility and will solely deliver improvements in the mechanics of the facility (e.g. boilers, roofs, heating, ventilation, water circulation, etc).

Therefore, this option does not deliver any improved trading position for the facility. It is anticipated that this will be a continuation of the current baseline trading position for the initial period. However, it is also likely that users will increasingly vote with their feet and choose to use alternative provision if the quality and presentation of the facility continues to deteriorate as it historically has been.

In summary, this option will keep the facility open for the medium term but will not result in any efficiency in the operation. In fact, given that the quality of the facility will continue to deteriorate and users are likely to vote with their feet, it is probable that less income will be generated at the facility which will put pressure on the Council to alter programmes, opening hours and staffing levels to achieve budget or annual efficiencies. This in turn results in a reduction of service to residents.

This option is a sticking plaster and postpones to a future date the key decision on the future of the facility. It does not provide a longer term solution or commitment to leisure in the Neilston area.

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Option 5 - Cessation of the service

Although the Council has categorically stated that cessation of the service in the area is something that it is not considering it is incumbent on KKP to identify this as a possible option in order to ensure that all possibilities have been considered.

The Council could save the current operational cost of £317,000 per annum by withdrawing from providing a leisure service and swimming pool in Neilston. However, this financial saving also needs to be viewed in the context of the disadvantages, which include:

- ◀ The loss of a swimming pool to the residents of Neilston.
- ◀ No local access to swimming lessons for young people in Neilston and limited access to residents from other parts of the district.
- ◀ No local access to swimming facilities for older people in Neilston.
- ◀ Overall reductions in levels of physical activity among older residents in the area.
- ◀ Significant impact on other pools of having to accommodate the training needs of Ren 96 swimming team and Neilston schools for swimming lessons.
- ◀ Increased cost of transport for Neilston schools to access swimming lessons.

In summary, if the Council was to progress with this as an option it would need to consider not only the impact on the Neilston community but also on other communities in East Renfrewshire. It is likely that there would have to be a complete review of swimming across the area; primarily to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to learn to swim sessions and then to other priorities such as disabled groups, women only, adult swimming, Ren 96, etc.. Although Neilston LC is not a financially efficient swimming facility it provides a sufficient number of swimming lessons and Ren 96 sessions to demonstrate a high value to local families with children and performance swimmers; this is something that it should potentially build on moving forward.

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Option 6 - Build a new joint leisure facility and library on an alternative site

KKP has identified this option given that there have been a number of advances in the design and development of swimming pools and sports centres over recent years which have brought the cost of developing them down significantly. This option is also predicated on other examples that we have seen in other parts of the country where an existing facility (or two facilities) is closed and a new facility built on an alternative location. In other circumstances this is pump primed by the fact that the land in which the existing facilities sit on is valuable from a housing or retail perspective and that the alternative venue for the new facility is owned by the Council.

In theory, this may be a viable option for East Renfrewshire Council in that it could develop a new leisure centre and library on a new site and develop on the site of both the leisure centre and library.

Consultation has suggested that the land value of both sites is not good and that there would be minimum surplus for investment following the demolition of both facilities. However, this may be a political decision that the Council is willing to consider.

In order to develop a new swimming pool, library and small fitness area we would estimate that this would cost in the region of £4 million. This would be based on a very efficient design remit. In this circumstance the new joint facility would cost in the region of £298,000 per annum to operate.

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In conclusion the financial impact of each of the options is summarised below:

Description	Baseline (pool & dry)	Baseline (pool, dry & library)	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 6
Staff Costs	334,938	389,938	334,938	359,938	124,121	354,938
Property Costs	133,351	158,351	125,875	135,875	72,231	126,262
Supplies and Services	13,399	17,399	13,399	17,399	10,201	21,399
Transport Costs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Administration Costs	3,613	9,613	3,613	9,613	1,526	15,613
Payments to Other Bodies	19,150	19,150	19,150	19,150	19,150	19,150
Other Operating Costs	3,304	3,304	3,304	3,304	3,304	3,304
Financing Costs	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	507,755	597,755	500,279	545,279	230,533	540,666
General Grant Income	0	0	0	0	0	0
General Sales, Fees & Charges	-23,389	-23,389	-28,067	-30,406	-58,473	-44,089
Resale of Equipment	-1,246	-1,246	-1,246	-1,246	-748	-1,557
Public Telephone Income	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vending Income	-7,609	-7,609	-7,609	-7,609	-5,326	-10,652
Action Zone - BACS (Monthly Members)	-1,721	-1,721	-2,065	-2,409	-1,721	-3,132
Fitness Programme	-2,130	-2,130	-2,449	-2,875	-2,343	-3,738
Action Zone - Non BACS (Casual)	-1,673	-1,673	-2,008	-2,091	-2,008	-2,719
Action Zone - Induction	-215	-215	-215	-215	-215	-215
Swimming Lessons	-129,756	-129,756	-129,756	-129,756	0	-142,732
Hairdryer Income	-469	-469	-469	-469	0	-469
School Swimming Lessons	-4,686	-4,686	-4,686	-4,686	0	-4,686
Club Income	-12,846	-12,846	-14,130	-14,130	0	-14,130
Equipment Hire	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coaching	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leisure Pass Income	0	0	0	0	0	0
Instructor Course Income	-5,670	-5,670	-5,670	-5,670	-7,088	-6,237
Other Agencies - General	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Accounts of the Authority	0	0	0	0	0	0
Recovery from Other Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overs and Shorts	658	658	658	658	658	658
Miscellaneous Income	0	-3,000	0	-3,000	0	-9,000
Revaluation of Non Impairment Gains	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-190,752	-193,752	-197,713	-203,905	-77,263	-242,699
(SURPLUS)/DEFICIT	317,003	404,003	302,567	341,374	153,270	297,968

*Option 4 would be the same as the existing baseline

This clearly identifies that the most financially efficient option for the Council is Option 5 - the cessation of the service. However, as previously stated this option is not being considered by the Council.

From the above, Option 3 is the most financially beneficial to the Council, delivering £160,000 per annum savings. However, it is unlikely that the Council would consider

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closing the swimming pool at Neilston LC as this is the key activity area that has driven public support to keep the facility operational and the rationale for the Council investing over £300,000 in the facility. In fact, if the Council decided to progress with Option 3, public opinion may suggest that it may as well progress with Option 5 - cessation of the service; as the feeling would be that this is what is happening.

Option 1 provides a minimal £15,000 per annum revenue saving to the Council after significant investment in the facility.

Option 2 provides an annual saving of £60,000 per annum as a result of combining both facilities within the footprint of the existing leisure centre. This option also has the added benefit of being able to offer extended library opening hours (if desirable) and of minimising the Council's future asset management liabilities on the library building.

Although Option 6 would deliver a new leisure centre and library facility the current sites do not provide sufficient capital receipt to make this a viable option.

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NEILSTON LEISURE CENTRE: EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Recommendations

Based on the above and the scope of our commission, KKP recommends that East Renfrewshire Council should undertake the following:

- ◀ Investigate the technical feasibility and detailed cost of delivering Option 2, which should include the following as a minimum:
 - ◀ A redeveloped swimming pool.
 - ◀ A new changing village with appropriate family and disabled changing.
 - ◀ A new library facility within the squash court and gym area which also extends into the current viewing area.
 - ◀ A multi-purpose room in the squash court and gym area, suitable for youth activities and wider fitness activities (e.g. functional training and Be Active programmes).
 - ◀ Develop a new entrance to the facility at the side of the centre with users entering directly into the current pool viewing area.
 - ◀ Redevelop the frontage of the facility to make it more attractive.
 - ◀ Create a single point of sale for the library and leisure centre.
 - ◀ Undertake car park improvements.

Ideally the above should be delivered within the existing footprint of the leisure centre (e.g. providing a mezzanine to the squash court area), but may require some additional extension at key parts of the building. It should also be noted that if a mezzanine floor is developed there will also be a requirement for a platform lift.

In order that the above can be as cost effective as possible the Council will require a slightly different operational model from its libraries and leisure centre operations. That is, it needs to be a holistic operation where staff are multi-skilled in the delivery of both services.