

UK House of Commons
Culture, Media and Sport
Second Report

Testing the Waters: the Sport of Swimming

INTRODUCTION

"Swimming is the best all round sport for our health. It is the least discriminating, certainly in age and ability and it has the highest appeal in the nation. Some honourable Member here mentioned that we cannot afford to do it. Well, we are not a third rate country, we are not a third world country, we are the third largest economy in the world and we darn well should afford it." -

Duncan Goodhew, MBE.

Edited, removing footnotes and appendices
and highlighting Duncan Goodhew's contributions
by Stanley Ulijaszek 2021

1. On 9 November we announced an evidence session into the sport of swimming. We set out three provisional issues for consideration:

- historic swimming pools, and the problems affecting these listed buildings
- swimming facilities available in communities
- facilities and training support available for competitive swimmers.

2. The scale of the response was extremely encouraging. We received over 45 submissions from a wide range of witnesses, including local swimming clubs, coaches, ex-athletes, parents of potential athletes, managers of local pools, campaigners for the protection of pools and regular swimmers with a love of the sport.

3. On 4 December 2001 we heard oral evidence from representatives from English Heritage; Victoria Baths Campaign, Manchester; Haggerston Pool Campaign, Hackney; Friends of Marshall Street Baths, Soho; Govanhill Pool, Glasgow; the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management; Sport England; the Amateur Swimming Association; and Olympic medallists Anita Lonsbrough, MBE, **Duncan Goodhew**, MBE and Sharron Davies MBE. We received a memorandum from the Local Government Association, and a joint memorandum from the Departments for Culture, Media and Sport, Education and Skills and Transport, Local Government and the Regions. This evidence is set out in this volume after the Report. We did not seek oral evidence from the Government nor local authorities given the constraints of time.

THE APPEAL OF SWIMMING AND THE CHALLENGE

4. Swimming, and its wide variety of disciplines, is the nation's most popular physical sporting activity, with nearly 12 million people swimming regularly, and an estimated 80 million visits to public sector pools a year. Swimming is the most popular sport for girls, and the second most popular for boys, with 50 per cent of children regularly participating.

5. The key challenge of maintaining the high levels of participation, of both adults and children, in swimming is the cost of providing the pools, which are among the most expensive and complex indoor sports buildings both to build and maintain. Research undertaken by Sport England has shown that 60 per cent of pools available for community use are now between 20 and 40 years old and will soon require modernisation or refurbishment. Sport England estimated that out of the £10 billion needed to modernise sports halls and swimming pools facilities, the cost for swimming pools alone is approximately £2billion . The Local Government Association (LGA) estimated that to achieve the modernisation of public pools a capital investment of £120m per annum over the next 15 years is required.

6. The funding for public sector pools comes from various sources. The Local Government Association estimated that net expenditure by local authorities on swimming facilities and provision is around £375million per annum, out of a total of £70 billion a year spent by local authorities in total on services. For the year

2001-2002, out of a total budget of roughly £1 billion, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport will provide £66.6 million to Sport in comparison to £360.7 million for Museums and Galleries and £252.6 million to the Arts. In 2000-2001, Sport England provided lottery funding to swimming and diving of £22 million.

7. The second challenge is the pattern of provision and the availability of facilities for the differing needs of the community. The sport of swimming covers various disciplines which impose different requirements on the facility. Learners need shallow water. Water polo, diving and synchronised swimming need deep water. Competitive swimmers need to train in 50 metre pools. Those swimming for fitness favour lane swimming. Children need room in which to splash around and have fun; wave machines, slides and flumes are very popular. Sport England stated in their memorandum that there is a limited need for additional water space, and yet we received evidence that pools are struggling to meet the needs of their wide variety of users. In particular, there is a manifest paucity of 50 metre competition class pools.

THE VALUE OF SWIMMING

Benefits of sport

8. There are many benefits of sport, including swimming, which have been outlined in memoranda to the Committee:

(a) *Health and fitness*—The Minister for Public Health endorsed the Government's Plan for Sport as complementary to the NHS Plan and National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease, and stated that experts advise 30 minutes of moderate activity five times a week to reduce the risk of heart disease, strokes and some cancers. Sport England, the Government and the Amateur Swimming Association all agree that swimming in particular helps to develop a healthier lifestyle through exercise, and that promoting this goal could prevent an increase in the estimated 60 per cent of the population who are overweight.

(b) *Fun and leisure*—Sport can be enjoyed on a non-competitive basis, and if sport is fun, the participation is more likely to be on a life-long basis.

(c) *Progression through to elite competition*—Through the networks of sporting clubs and coaches, young athletes are able to compete in small town and county competitions through to national and international competitions.

(d) *Promoting personal development and providing an alternative activity to dalliance with drugs, alcohol and crime*—In the preface to the Government's Plan for Sport, the then Minister for Sport stated "There is growing evidence that involvement in sport helps to prevent young people from getting mixed up in crime and drugs. In short, sport is good for society.

Specific benefits of swimming

9. Swimming is both enjoyable and beneficial through infancy to old age, and there are many aspects to it:

- leisure and fun
- lane swimming
- water polo
- diving
- synchronised swimming
- competitive racing

10. Participation in swimming includes the disabled, provided that the facilities are accessible. For example, the swimming team returned from the Sydney Paralympics with a phenomenal 62 medals (12 more than Australia) out of the total Great Britain medal tally of 131.

11. Swimming can be socially inclusive, if facilities are provided at a reasonable entrance fee, and if facilities and programming are sensitive to cultural differences. For example, the Committee has heard evidence that the sole provision in one particular community of modern glass-walled pools has caused a bar on swimming for Muslim women in that area.

12. Swimming courses teach both water safety and emergency skills. **Duncan Goodhew** reminded the Committee that he was able to use resuscitation skills, learned through swimming, to help save the life of a Member of Parliament in February 2000. Although the rate of people drowning in the UK has decreased since 1983, the Amateur Swimming Association has given evidence that the number of children under 14 who drowned in 1999 had increased since the previous year. The Ofsted report on swimming at Key Stage 2 highlighted the deficiencies of some schools in relation to the teaching of water safety. It seems important to improve the nation's water safety skills, not just for swimming but for other water-based sports that the population participates in. The National Curriculum 2000 even changed the name of the programme of swimming to 'swimming activities and water safety' to emphasise this. Evidence from the Royal Life Saving Society UK has pointed towards a probable adverse effect on the water safety of local communities should they be left without adequate pool and teaching provision.

13. Sport in general has been recognised as beneficial to the nation's wellbeing and health. Swimming is uniquely beneficial across the whole of society, and as the country's most popular sporting activity it merits appropriate investment.

POLICY AND STRATEGY

Government

14. The Government published its "Plan for Sport: A Sporting Future for All", in March 2001. It outlined a strategy to promote sport in schools and the community, including: the refurbishment of school sports facilities; the creation

of a community sports alliance; a school sports alliance and specialist sports colleges; the promotion of out of school hours activities including sports; and the establishment of school sports co-ordinators and a network of coaching and support. In response to the concerns of the Ofsted Report on Swimming at Key Stage 2, the Plan also established a Swimming Advisory Group which was due to report in December 2001. Its terms of reference were "to consider the main findings of the Ofsted report, and other relevant survey findings, and to make recommendations of workable proposals, both in the short term and long term address the main issues of concern, including water safety lessons, and how to increase the number of children who can swim 25 metres by Key Stage 2".

15. A priority of the Plan for Sport is to encourage children into sporting activities and competition. Despite the popularity and benefits of swimming, there was scant reference specifically to that subject. Likewise, there is no specific government funding for swimming, with the New Opportunities Fund and Space for Sports and Arts unlikely to be used for the building of pools. The Government states in its memorandum that "it is for local authorities to ensure that spatial development plans and local sports development policies reflect the importance of swimming and set aside sufficient investment to improve or, if necessary, to replace existing facilities ... even the most modern facilities will usually require a long term commitment from the local authority to guarantee for all income groups."

16. Although no funding from the Government is forthcoming for swimming, the document states that "the Government wants to encourage local authorities to look at new and innovative ways of modernising and rebuilding swimming facilities." Sport England are to offer advice to local authorities and clubs in developing swimming strategies, whilst English Heritage provides advice on listed buildings.

17. The Government should recognise the unique society-wide benefits of swimming and reflect this in its sporting strategies. Reference to swimming within an overall plan for sport is no substitute for a specific strategy on swimming. It would be of little value for the Government to welcome this Report while failing to back up encouraging noises with specific action such as dedicated funding being made available to local authorities for their swimming pools.

Amateur Swimming Association

18. The Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) is the governing body for swimming in England, and with the Scottish and Welsh bodies forms the Amateur Swimming Federation of Great Britain. The ASA organises competition throughout England, establishes the laws of the sport and supports the national teams for swimming, diving, water polo, open water, and synchronized swimming. The ASA offers education programmes and certification for teachers, coaches and officials, and operates an awards scheme. The ASA also supports the 1600 affiliated clubs through a National/Regional/County structure. **Duncan Goodhew** said that the ASA was, however, "not ready structurally to run a modernised sport"; and Sharron Davies pointed to the failure of the current system to retain and develop talent. The Association's current aim is to

encourage all local authorities to produce a written swimming strategy, taking account of the swimming needs of all the community, and to provide the facilities necessary to meet these needs. To this end, together with Sport England, the ASA has developed the following initiatives:

(a) *Swim 21*—the Amateur Swimming Association's national development plan which aims to ensure high standards of teaching and coaching by providing a network of development officers to work closely with local authorities and to try and encourage clubs to work constructively with local authorities and local education authorities.

(b) *From Arm Bands to Gold Medals*—ASA's national facility plan for swimming together with Sport England, to encourage investment in pools, to develop a network to accommodate all the swimming disciplines, water polo, diving, synchronised swimming and swimming. This plan has yet to be published, and Sport England urges the ASA to do so.

(c) *Active Sports Programme*—Sport England's development programme targeting 10 sports including swimming, and encouraging young people to become more involved in sport. The programme created 45 sports partnerships to assist in training and coaching and to promote easier access to facilities.

19. As well as the modernisation of existing pools, the ASA also sees a need for new 50 metre pools in England for elite swimming. An objective is to have at least one eight lane, 25 metre pool with adequate spectator support in each county, and to increase the number of 50 metre pools in line with provision in other comparable countries. It was, however, not readily apparent from the evidence given by the ASA that it had a firm and practical strategy for delivering this national programme.

Delivery mechanisms

20. In order to achieve the aims of ASA's and Sport England's programmes, Sport England has awarded Lottery funding to swimming, covering the period from 1997 to September 2001, of £220 million.^[26] Exchequer funding of £0.5 million is being provided to elite swimming this year through UK Sport and Sport England. However, following the poor medal tally of swimmers at the Sydney 2000 Olympics, swimming has dropped from a priority 1, to a priority 2 sport. Funding, from the World Class Performance, Potential and Start Programmes, has been cut from £11.2 million (over the period 1997 to September 2000) to £8.5 million (to cover October 2000 to March 2005). This policy, while rewarding success at international competitions, ignores the possibility that low levels of achievement might be best tackled by long-term investment rather than punitive cuts.

21. The responsibility for the maintenance of existing pools and funding for the provision of new pools has been firmly placed by the Government on Local Authorities.

STATE OF PLAY

Schools

22. The current National Curriculum requirements for swimming at Key Stage 2 (age 11) include:

(a) Individual pupils to swim unaided, competently and safely for at least 25 metres.

(b) To develop confidence in water.

(c) To promote the principles and skills of water safety and survival. Ofsted inspectors are asked also to evaluate in relation to swimming:

(d) The quality and effectiveness of the teaching or instruction.

(e) The steps taken by schools to give support to poor or non-swimmers.

(f) The quality of planning, time allocation and organisational arrangements.

23. The Ofsted Report on Swimming in Key Stage 2 found that over four out of five pupils could swim 25 metres, and that the teaching of swimming was good or better in four out of five lessons. These adequate overall figures conceal the fact that, in inner city areas and those areas with a high level of deprivation based upon the free school meals indicator, only two thirds of pupils could swim 25 metres. As children from well-off families can afford to swim out of school, school swimming is not delivering sufficiently to those in need. Additional concerns of the report were that in some schools water safety and survival were not covered "sufficiently well", half of schools had no specific provision for poor or reluctant swimmers, and over half of schools had reduced the time allocated to swimming in recent years. ISRM stated in their memorandum that Key Stage Two attainment targets should always be regarded and referred to as a starting point and not as proof of swimming competence. "We suspect that children do not learn to swim as well under the Key Stage Two requirement as they did in previous years. The result is that they do not feel confident enough later on outside school to pursue swimming as a leisure activity or sport."

24. **Duncan Goodhew** told us that Learn to Swim schemes often had a "tick box" attitude, with contractors having no financial incentive to achieve more than the bare minimum of 25 metres swum by each child. He suggested that the definition of "being able to swim" needed reconsideration. We agree and consider that teaching children to swim, but only just, may in fact create a hazardous false confidence.

25. In order to improve the level and quality of current participation by school children in swimming, schools must be able to have affordable access to facilities. Sport England stated that it is the cost associated with hiring pools, lifeguards, safe transportation of pupils, and health and safety and insurance requirements that has led schools to opt out of providing swimming, and urged the Government to ensure that every child is given the opportunity to achieve Key Stage 2 swimming targets. As the memorandum from the ISRM points out, strategies for the provision of school swimming in local authority pools need to be formed between the local authorities and local education authorities so that prohibitive costs are not passed on to schools.

26. The Government's memorandum stated that the Space for Sport and Arts Programme and the New Opportunities Fund's PE and Sports Programme will provide over £581 million for the improvement of school sports facilities in England, with decisions on projects being led by the local education authority. The Local Government Association told the Committee that neither of these programmes is likely to feature many swimming pool projects as these would require a disproportionately large amount of the funding available. The Government's response to the Ofsted report has been to set up the Swimming Advisory Group which was due to report in December 2001, focussing on facilities, water safety and an overall swimming strategy. The Committee awaits its report with interest.

27. As Sharron Davies told the Committee, "it is terribly important that all children learn to swim in schools; therefore they can then be encouraged to go to the clubs ... to bring them through to be elite athletes or just maintain them as regular competing youngsters who want to be with other athletes". The pressures on schools in urban areas to provide funding for transport to suitable facilities has led to a failure of some schools to meet National Curriculum requirements on swimming and water safety.

28. Evidence from the historic pools campaigns confirms that closures of community-based pools have led to swimming being taken off the curriculum altogether in some cases. With the current rate of drowning increasing among the under-14s, water safety and the ability to swim should be considered more important than ever. We believe that it should be a key point of Government policy on sport and education that every child should have the opportunity, and access to facilities, to learn to swim.

In the community

29. Local authorities currently provide approximately 1,400 swimming pools for local communities, including leisure pools, historic baths, regional and international short course pools and 50 metre competition pools. Competing for water space are swimming clubs, schools, elite swimmers and those swimming for pleasure or exercise.

30. The current rate of growth in the private sector leisure industry suggests it could continue to draw away swimmers from public sector pools and decrease

revenue for local authorities. Local authorities are under a requirement to maximise their return from leisure services, whilst still meeting a community need. This may lead to children and swimming clubs being marginalised as they represent lower value customers. Clubs have already expressed to the Committee their concern over higher and higher fees being charged to them by local authorities. Evidence to the Committee has shown that, nationally, the price of pool entry for junior swimmers has suffered an increase on average by approximately 38 per cent, between 1998 and 2001.

'MODERN' POOLS

31. Most of the existing community pools were built in the leisure industry construction boom of the 1960's to 1980's, partly as a result of positive Local Authority Funding Agreements. Consequently, 60 per cent of the existing facilities are now facing the need for refurbishment or replacement, and, according to Sport England estimates, the repair bill will be of the order of £2 billion (not including school pools).

32. Despite Lottery grants of £222 million for the development and refurbishment of swimming projects (making swimming the sport that has received most Sport England Lottery funds to date), Sport England told the Committee that they felt the Lottery resources were not enough to address the needs of pools in this country. Sport England had recently put in a bid to the Capital Modernisation Fund for a specific programme to modernise swimming pools, but this bid was rejected by H M Treasury shortly before Sport England gave evidence to the Committee. Sport England said that it did consider that there was sufficient funding for the development of strategies necessary to identify the need for community facilities.

33. The Local Government Association wrote that, as the ever-decreasing Sports Lottery funding to local authority projects gives priority to areas of social deprivation, for those councils outside of priority areas Lottery money is "becoming a fund of last resort." The LGA saw a need for the DCMS PFI allocation to be increased within the current Spending Review, to provide councils with funds for the development of leisure facilities. The LGA also expected that, within local government legislation, there should be more flexibility and freedom for councils with regards to capital spending from the new prudential capital system, allowing councils to borrow the funds necessary to improve facilities.

34. Currently only around 15 per cent of local authority pools, as part of the boroughs' total leisure services, are being run by private contractors, and generally these public-private partnerships are found in the South and South East Regions. As the real problem is the cost of capital and revenue funding, local authorities are becoming more interested in the concept of offering longer contracts of 10-15 years in return for private contractors investing in the capital facilities.

35. The ASA's facility strategy should help local authorities fulfil the Best Value requirements by enabling authorities to assess their current stock and the needs of the community when making decisions on investing funds. Through Lottery funding, the ASA now has a team of ten regional development officers whose job is to work with local authorities to develop swimming strategies. The ASA cannot make decisions about local community needs; that is for the local authority to consider when deciding what its facility requirements are. Only 30 per cent of local authorities in England have produced sport and recreation strategies to date. Noel Winter, facilities officer for the ASA, told the Committee: "The first question I ask the local authority is who they want to use the facility. Quite often they do not have an idea".

36. The ASA has assessed the facilities available in England and considers that there is a need for 50 metre competition facilities and training facilities and that every county and large conurbation needs an eight-lane 25 metre pool. Together, ISRM and ASA agree that any new pools that are built, including 50 metre competition pools, must have flexible designs to enable maximum use by the whole community. They advocate the use of moveable floors, booms and bulkheads to enable pools to be altered in size and shape as different users swim throughout the day. Together with efficient programming by their management, modernised pools will have the chance to ensure that the needs of the community are met. Currently, the LGA believes that funding issues are absorbing the time and resources of managers, who could otherwise be developing swimming programmes.

37. Unless existing community pools are refurbished and the facilities improved, more affluent swimmers will be drawn away to private leisure pools and take with them valuable revenue. More local authorities need to develop strategies to enable them to make efficient assessments of the needs of their facilities, and should work with the regional directors of ASA who are funded for this purpose. Local authority swimming pool managers should concentrate on drawing up successful programming of facilities to enable the whole community to swim, rather than being forced to give priority to funding issues. Sport England should be provided with more funding to enable local authorities to fulfil their strategies for the modernisation of their neglected pools.

HISTORIC POOLS

38. English Heritage and the POOL campaign have given copious evidence to the Committee on the case for maintaining historic pools, and also the challenges these pools face. There are currently 79 pools in England listed as of special architectural or historic interest. Of these, seven are listed at grade II* and the remaining 72 are listed at grade II.

39. Traditionally pools were built in deprived areas with few other nearby amenities, and were originally provided to meet the concerns of public health and hygiene. Gill Wright of the Manchester Victoria Baths Trust saw the redevelopment of historic pools as a way of leading the regeneration of deprived areas.

40. Most historic pools are an important form of Edwardian architecture and represent social history which ought to be preserved. English Heritage, the Government's lead body for the historic environment in England, told the Committee that historic pools are a "prime example of the ordinary working heritage that most people understand and value ... historic swimming baths have an important part to play in the creation of distinctive, civilised and 'liveable' cities". Gill Wright argued in evidence to the Committee that "it is not just about the architecture, it is about the social history which is in that building". We believe that the architectural importance to the nation cannot be ignored. In the months before its closure, the Marshall Street Baths were voted one of the 10 most beautiful public pools in the country; they are now on the Buildings at Risk register.

41. Pools can be seen as a resource at the heart of deprived communities to encourage social inclusion, and health, and promote beneficial alternatives to drugs, alcohol and crime.

42. Pools are an amenity which are used by young, old, disabled and ethnic minorities alike who would be discouraged from swimming by travelling further afield to modern facilities. The Friends of Marshall Street Baths, Soho provided evidence of three schools being adversely affected by its closure, with some years having their swimming sessions stopped as the distance to an alternative pool is too far for younger children, and other years having their previous year-round swimming reduced to two terms. When the Haggerston Pool was closed, eight schools took swimming off their curriculum, as alternative pools, often too crowded, were considered too far to walk to, and transport too expensive. One of these schools has resumed sessions at 50 per cent of its previous regularity, whilst two schools are about to reintroduce swimming, but at a significant cost in terms of providing transport. At the Govanhill Pool in Glasgow, only 50 per cent of the children who belonged to the swimming club continue to take part in its activities. Manchester Victoria Baths has seen the discontinuation of the schools swimming association, and the reduction of school galas. The local swimming club has a waiting list of 50 per cent of the capacity of the club. Gill Wright reiterated in her evidence to the committee, that transport is a major issue for the people in the Ardwick ward of Manchester who used to swim at the Victoria Baths. People are not visiting the new Commonwealth pool as it is either too expensive or too difficult to reach.

43. Sport England stated to the Committee in their memorandum that "ethnic minority groups continue to be under-represented in their use of swimming pools. Increasing levels of participation among these groups is a key aim of swimming pools". Similarly, David Sparkes of the Amateur Swimming Association told the Committee that they had been unable to connect ethnic minorities with the elite end of swimming; and Mr Kelvin Juba of the ASA told the Committee: "probably less than two per cent of people who are swimming are from ethnic minority groups around the country ... this is a real problem that swimming and swimming pool operators are going to have to address in the future". Savio D'Souza of the Govanhill Pool, Glasgow suggested that, whilst some historic pools are able to provide suitable facilities for ethnic minorities, more modern glass-fronted pools were discouraging participation, particularly for Muslim women.

44. Campaigns in Manchester, Glasgow and London have produced a huge amount of support from all sections of the community for the preservation of the local pools. Most campaigns appear to have been set up in the absence of constructive dialogue between local authorities and the community. English Heritage aim to help re-establish and encourage partnerships to work towards a sustainable future for historic pools.

45. The main challenge faced by historic pools is the huge cost of maintenance, repairs and renovation. Evidence submitted by Save Britain's Heritage detailed the structural problems that historic pools face. Modern users expect a comfortable internal environment, with higher water and air temperatures than were envisaged in the original construction. As a result, energy loss raises the cost of heating, and condensation problems arise which affect the health of the structure. With many pools nearly one hundred years old and in need of repair, the cost is too great for local authorities who have limited budgets, and who are now also facing the need to repair more modern pools built in the 70s and 80s which have greater popular appeal. Evidence given to the Committee showed that significant funding is needed to bring historic pools back into use. Haggerston Baths, Hackney has estimated that £3.5 million is needed, Marshall Street Baths in Soho need £7.1 million, and Victoria Baths in Manchester need £10.93 million. All three pools have developed business plans to transform the pools into 'healthy living centres'.

46. English Heritage told the Committee that it only has a limited allocation of grant funding from central government to assist listed buildings. In the last financial year, English Heritage had only £3.6 million, from grants in aid from central government, to allocate to 35,000 listed buildings in London, and for the rest of England £8.6 million was available for over 500,000 listed buildings. Paul Velluet of English Heritage described this as "a very, very thin spread". Rather than a funding provider, English Heritage sees its role as co-operating with local authorities and communities in encouraging the effective use of pools, working towards grant assistance to bring pools back into use, and channelling their limited grants into projects to help lever in other support from local authorities and the private sector.

47. English Heritage believes that the way for historic pools to survive is through partnership agreements between local authorities and private concerns, and cites Richmond Upon Thames, Saltdean Lido near Brighton and the Jubilee Pool in Penzance as successful examples. English Heritage is also currently undertaking a pilot study in the North West region of the interconnection between sporting facilities and heritage buildings, the results of which may be useful for the rest of the country.

48. Despite the appeal of public-private partnerships as a solution to the problem of funding historic pools, the POOL campaign gave evidence to the Committee that there are difficulties in obtaining private sector support for non-leisure pools in deprived areas, as these are not seen as lucrative for business. Even when such interest is secured for a historic pool, problems occur. Barbara Corr, representing the Friends of Marshall Street Baths, Soho, told the Committee that a private sector operator had expressed interest in investing in the pool and had offered to invest £5 million if the local authority agreed to invest £2 million. As the local authority had declined this offer, the deal had

fallen through and private sector funding had been withdrawn. Gill Wright, representing Manchester Victoria Baths Trust, told the Committee that, once sources of capital funding had been identified, the difficulty came in balancing the revenue costs with the project expenditure. The local authority were not willing to provide revenue support as they had in the past, and this proved a barrier to private investment. The Committee also received evidence from Camberwell Leisure Centre outlining its partnership approach to attracting funding.

49. An added burden on historic pools is VAT on repairs to listed buildings. Although zero rating applies to alteration works, VAT on repairs and maintenance is standard rated. Victoria Baths in Manchester has estimated that the necessary repair costs of £9.1 million will attract a VAT bill of £1.83million. Determination of whether repairs should be treated in the same way as alteration works rests with the European Commission. The Commission has said that it will look carefully at the issue of VAT treatment of heritage buildings when the VAT directive is reviewed in 2003. There is however likely to be a long shopping list of VAT reforms for the Commission to consider. It may be some time before listed building obtain the relief, which listed churches recently received, from VAT on repairs.

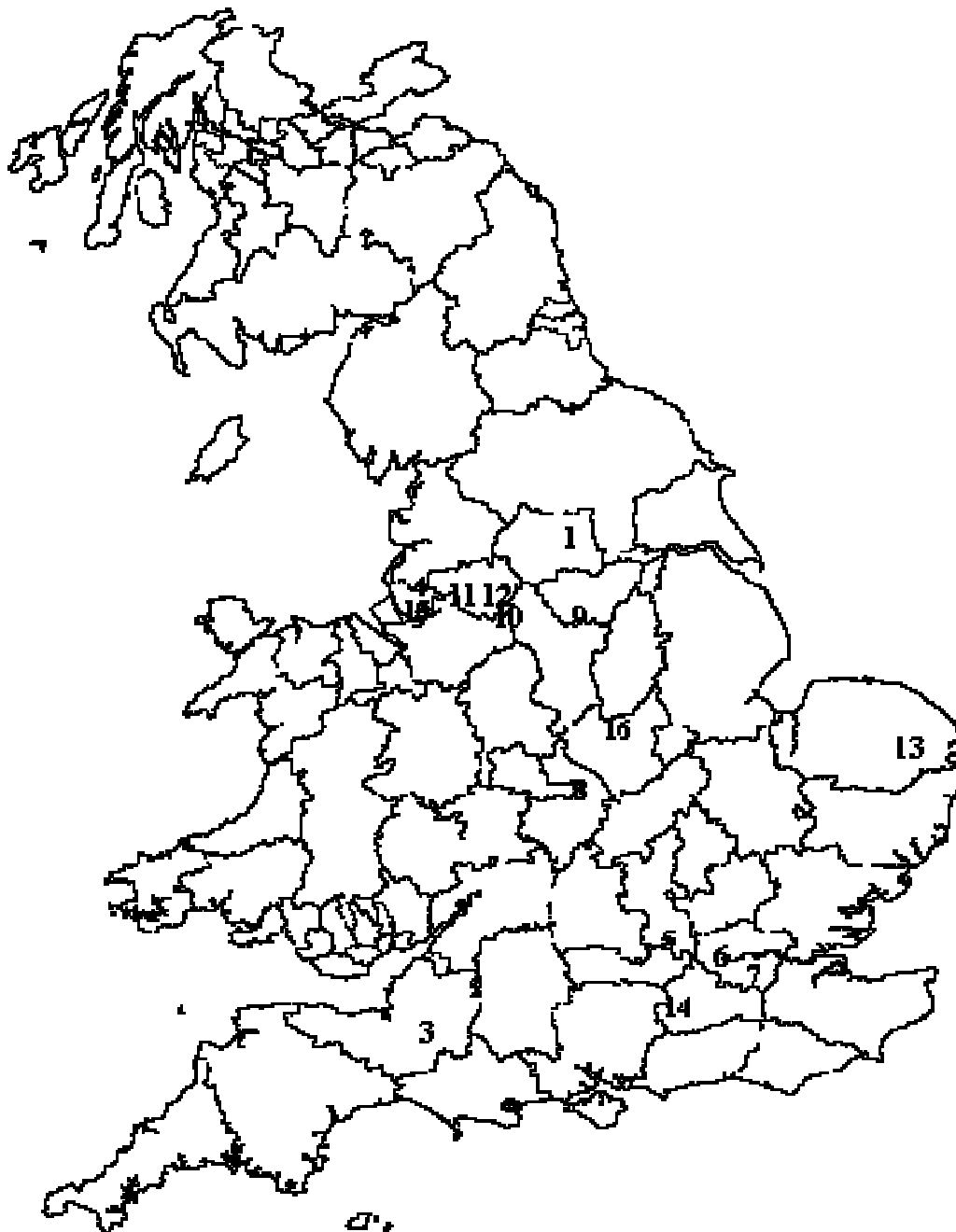
50. There are also concerns that historic facilities are old-fashioned and some require significant alteration to meet disability and health and safety requirements. The Local Government Association expressed a concern that historic pools "remain inaccessible in design to the whole community. Indeed the final stages of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 are most likely to add to local councils' financial pressures in this area." Bringing facilities into line with modern standards is a challenge for both historic pools and pools built more recently in the 1970s and 1980s. The evidence from the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management commented on the robust and superior building standards of historic buildings, and saw no reason why pools should not be able to meet satisfactory pool water and hygiene standards. Evidence has been submitted by the historic pools that they were used by swimmers with disabilities on account of having steps, rather than ladders, into the water. These swimmers now face difficulties in finding alternative suitable facilities.

51. Historic pools represent a valuable part of the UK's heritage. The priority afforded to them needs to be assessed sensitively and carefully within the context of total provision across the relevant community (including transport issues, potential usage, importance in terms of social history and architectural quality). We cannot ignore the realities of budgetary constraints, but imaginative and creative funding solutions should be sought in consultation with the local community. Currently, English Heritage cannot afford to help significantly with the funding of the refurbishment of historic pools. The Committee believes there is a case for more resources from the Heritage Lottery Fund being made available to historic pools for this purpose. Historic pools should also be looked at from the point of view of social regeneration or preventing social degeneration. The Government should reconsider how such facilities can be developed to support deprived areas. It should also take steps to seek to relieve them of the burden of VAT on repair and renovation.

Elite and club sporting provision

52. The Committee has received many memoranda from swimming clubs and associations stating that the provision of facilities for training and hosting competitions are inadequate. There are two main issues, the lack of water space for elite training in local authority pools, and the lack of 50 metre pools for long course training and for international standard competitions. As Noel Winter of the ASA explained, elite swimmers need to train twice a day; and whilst they can use 25 metre pools as supplementary training, they also need to train once a day in a 50 metre pool if they are to compete internationally in long course competitions. This is an issue which has support from Bill Sweetenham, Britain's new National Performance Director for swimming. The current minimum for an international standard competition swimming facility is a 50 metre pool with 10 lanes, with adequate accommodation for spectators and competitors and car parking. Sheffield currently has the only pool capable of holding an international competition, but even this does not meet full international standards as it does not have a 50 metre warm up and swim down pool.^[86] By the end of 2002 England will have 19 50 metre pools (in various state of repair), about the same number of pools in Berlin or Paris alone.

50 metre Pools in England



1	LEEDS INTERNATIONAL POOL	9	PONDS FORGE INTERNATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE
2	UNIVERSITY OF BATH	10	GRANGE CENTRAL POOLS
3	MILLFIELD SCHOOL	11	MANKESIDE COMMUNITY HALL
4	WIGAN INTERNATIONAL POOL	12	MANCHESTER COMMONWEALTH POOL
5	WYLMER SPORTS CENTRE	13	NORK UNIVERSITY
6	GURNELL POOL AND LEISURE CENTRE	14	MOD ALDERSHOT
7	CRYSTAL PALACE NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE	15	PILTUN SPORTS CENTRE - BURN BRIDGE
8	COVENTRY SPORTS CENTRE	16	LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY - under construction

53. The lack of 50 metre pools in England means that there is not one pool where the ASA can take the national team to a training camp over a prolonged period of time. Great Britain won seven medals (including two golds) at this year's world championships in Fukuoka, but returned from the 2000 Sydney Olympics with no swimming medals at all. Whilst there has been increased Lottery funding under the World Class Programme for elite swimming over recent years, it was, as we have pointed out, subsequently reduced as a result of the Sydney failure to produce medals, and swimming is now classed as a priority two sport. Sport England ought surely to take into account the success of British Swimmers at the European Championships in December 2001, both in winning medals and in breaking Commonwealth and British records. Whilst the funding remains in place to produce elite swimming programmes, the elite facilities also need to be provided if swimmers are to compete on an equal basis with other countries. As the ISRM wrote to the Committee: "children need role models, heroes that can inspire them to do great things with their own lives". Enabling elite swimmers to win gold medals encourages the medal winners of the future to swim.

54. Whilst the problems of elite swimming may be redressed by Sport England's commitment in principle to fund a limited number of 50 metre pools, it remains important for the lower end of competition swimming to be supported in order to provide elite champions of the future. **Duncan Goodhew** told us: "Winning gold medals is about probability. You have to get as many people taking part as possible". Whilst the ASA stated that most general requirements can be met by the provision of 25 metre pools, it is the access to such facilities that is proving problematical for clubs. Many children are forced to train early in the morning, or late at night when they should be in bed. Where there is a lack of 25 metre pools in an area, parents are forced to transport children to suitable pools for training at a significant cost which cannot always be met by less well-off families.

55. Swimming clubs have submitted evidence of the increasing fees being charged by local authorities, and of water space being prioritised for the more lucrative customers who swim for exercise. Anita Lonsbrough told the Committee of an example where existing 25 metre facilities are being replaced by a leisure pool. Whilst leisure pools are useful in introducing children to swimming, and providing an interest in the sport, they are not suitable for competitive training.

56. Provision is different in the USA, where university pools are linked to sports colleges and communities, and this model is being adopted by the Australian Institute of Sport. In this country, High Performance Centres are being developed for sport as part of the English Institute of Sport, and also Specialist Sports Colleges are being developed under the Government's plan for Sport. One such High Performance Centre will be the 50 metre pool being built at Loughborough University. This could be seen as a flagship for community involvement in a sporting centre of excellence. Provided pools are made available for the whole county in which they are situated, the ASA are broadly supportive of this move to involve communities with university facilities. However, in Hatfield there is currently a debate over a proposed new pool. Hertfordshire University and the local club are pressing for an upgrade of existing plans so as to provide a 50 metre pool. The local authority and Sport

England are resisting requests to provide the extra £2 million needed to expand the proposed 25 metre pool into a 50 metre facility. It seems clear that if universities are willing to share their elite-standard facilities with the wider community, they will need the funding to create better pools.

57. Whilst existing 25 metre pools need to be modernised, there appears to be a case for investing in 50 metre pools which can be used by a whole county for swimming. With efficient programming and the use of moveable floors and bulkheads, pools can be altered during a day to serve the whole community. New 50 metre pools and refurbishment of existing pools need investment, but whilst the structure of the sport remains based on swimming clubs and associations feeding through future medalists they need to have water space and the time to train. We cannot be surprised when swimming prowess becomes scarce and stars like Sharron Davies, **Duncan Goodhew** and Anita Lonsbrough emerge despite the system rather than because of it. Anita Lonsbrough told the Committee "Sport is not as we knew it ... It is now a business; and we have not invested enough in our business."

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) Sport in general has been recognised as beneficial to the nation's wellbeing and health. Swimming is uniquely beneficial across the whole of society, and as the country's most popular sporting activity it merits appropriate investment (paragraph 13).
- (b) The Government should recognise the unique society-wide benefits of swimming and reflect this in its sporting strategies. Reference to swimming within an overall plan for sport is no substitute for a specific strategy on swimming. It would be of little value for the Government to welcome this Report while failing to back up encouraging noises with specific action such as dedicated funding being made available to local authorities for their swimming pools (paragraph 17).
- (c) This policy, while rewarding success at international competitions, ignores the possibility that low levels of achievement might be best tackled by long-term investment rather than punitive cuts (paragraph 20).
- (d) **Duncan Goodhew** told us that Learn to Swim schemes often had a "tick box" attitude, with contractors having no financial incentive to achieve more than the bare minimum of 25 metres swum by each child. He suggested that the definition of "being able to swim" needed reconsideration. We agree and consider that teaching children to swim, but only just, may in fact create a hazardous false confidence (paragraph 24).
- (e) As Sharron Davies told the Committee, "it is terribly important that all children learn to swim in schools; therefore they can then be encouraged to go to the clubs ... to bring them through to be elite athletes or just maintain them as regular competing youngsters who want to be with other athletes". The pressures on schools in urban areas to provide funding for transport to suitable facilities has led to a failure of some schools to meet National Curriculum requirements on swimming and water safety (paragraph 27).

- (f) Evidence from the historic pools campaigns confirms that closures of community-based pools have led to swimming being taken off the curriculum altogether in some cases. With the current rate of drowning increasing among the under-14s, water safety and the ability to swim should be considered more important than ever. We believe that it should be a key point of Government policy on sport and education that every child should have the opportunity, and access to facilities, to learn to swim (paragraph 28).
- (g) Unless existing community pools are refurbished and the facilities improved, more affluent swimmers will be drawn away to private leisure pools and take with them valuable revenue. More local authorities need to develop strategies to enable them to make efficient assessments of the needs of their facilities, and should work with the regional directors of ASA funded for this purpose. Local authority swimming pool managers should concentrate on drawing up successful programming of facilities to enable the whole community to swim, rather than being forced to give priority to funding issues. Sport England should be provided with more funding to enable local authorities to fulfil their strategies for the modernisation of their neglected pools (paragraph 37).
- (h) Pools are an amenity which are used by young, old, disabled and ethnic minorities alike who would be discouraged from swimming by travelling further afield to modern facilities (paragraph 42).
- (i) Historic pools represent a valuable part of the UK's heritage. The priority afforded to them needs to be assessed sensitively and carefully within the context of total provision across the relevant community (including transport issues, potential usage, importance in terms of social history and architectural quality). We cannot ignore the realities of budgetary constraints, but imaginative and creative funding solutions should be sought in consultation with the local community. Currently, English Heritage cannot afford to help significantly with the funding of the refurbishment of historic pools. The Committee believes there is a case for more resources from the Heritage Lottery Fund being made available to historic pools for this purpose. Historic pools should also be looked at from the point of view of social regeneration or preventing social degeneration. The Government should reconsider how such facilities can be developed to support deprived areas. It should also take steps to seek to relieve them of the burden of VAT on repair and renovation (paragraph 51).
- (j) Whilst existing 25 metre pools need to be modernised, there appears to be a case for investing in 50 metre pools which can be used by a whole county for swimming. With efficient programming and the use of moveable floors and bulkheads, pools can be altered during a day to serve the whole community. New 50 metre pools and refurbishment of existing pools need investment, but whilst the structure of the sport remains based on swimming clubs and associations feeding through future medalists they need to have water space and the time to train. We cannot complain when swimming prowess becomes scarce and stars like Sharron Davies, **Duncan Goodhew** and Anita Lonsbrough arise despite the system rather than because of it. Anita Lonsbrough told the Committee "Sport is not as we knew it ... It is now a business; and we have not invested enough in our business." (paragraph 57).

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE
RELATING TO THE REPORT**

TUESDAY 18 DECEMBER 2001
Mr Gerald Kaufman, in the Chair

Mr Chris Bryant
Mr Frank Doran

Alan Keen
Miss Julie Kirkbride

Michael Fabricant
Mr Adrian Flook

Rosemary McKenna

LIST OF WITNESSES

Tuesday 4 December 2001

ENGLISHHERITAGE

Mr Paul Velluet

MANCHESTER VICTORIA BATHS

Ms Gill Wright

GOVANHILL POOL, GLASGOW

Mr Savio D'Souza

HAGGERSTON POOL ACTION GROUP, HACKNEY

Ms Carolyn Clark

FRIENDS OF MARSHALL STREET BATHS, SOHO

Ms Barbara Corr

AMATEUR SWIMMING ASSOCIATION

Mr David Sparkes, Chief Executive

Mr Noel Winter, Facilities Officer

Mr Kelvin Juba

SPORTENGLAND

Mr David Carpenter, Director, Lottery Co-ordination and More Medals

Mr David Payne, Director, More Places Directorate

INSTITUTE OF SPORT AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Mr Ralph Riley, Chief Executive

Ms Anita Lonsborough MBE

Ms Sharron Davies MBE

Mr **Duncan Goodhew** MBE

Examination of Witnesses (Questions 80 - 98)

TUESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2001

MS ANITA LONSBROUGH, MBE, MS SHARRON DAVIES, MBE

AND MR **DUNCAN GOODHEW**, MBE

80. If we are going to do that, then we need to start our support at a much lower level and Danny's emphasis is very much on club swimming. Do you think that we really need to look at the strategy which has to be developed, which has to find some way of encouraging the clubs who are really the seedcorn of swimming.

(Ms Davies) The funding is now there to keep the elite athletes in the sport. If we look at the average age of swimmers ten years ago it was about ten years younger than it is now because people were having to retire because they just could not stay in the sport. That is what Lottery has done to swimming. You do need that broad pyramid. As a mum, as well as an athlete, I talk about school sport as well. It is terribly important that all children learn to swim in schools, therefore they can then be encouraged to go to the clubs and the clubs have that system in place to bring them through to be elite athletes or just to maintain them as a regular competing youngster who wants to be with other athletes. My son swims but he also does Tai-kwondo, he also does judo, he does all sorts of things. Eventually he will do something he enjoys the most and is probably the best at. There is an awful lot to be got out of just doing it, not necessarily doing it to the top level. What you have to have in place is the ability to go to the top level if you want to. He looks at rowing and he sees someone like Steve, so that makes him excited and want to do it. If we do not have the Steves, no-one is going to be very excited about doing it.

(Mr Goodhew) I have to take you back because you are looking at a very complex thing in a very short period of time. First of all you have to look at probability. Winning gold medals is about probability. You have to get as many people taking part as possible. In this country we are very firmly placed in schools on the three Rs from the age of four. Research shows that it should be six or seven. We are concentrating on intellectual skills rather than physical bases for those to be built on. There is significant evidence to show that the cognitive skill process is better developed by physical exercise than classroom. That is in tandem with the fact that you can reduce school time, academic time by 26 per cent and as long as physical exercise is put in place of that 26 per cent, there is no change latitudinally or longitudinally to school results. The current success of specialist sports colleges shows that properly managed exercise enhances the quality of academic work. Small wonder: we are not designed to polish chairs. The physiology of children certainly does not encourage that. I chair a cross-governmental group and quite soon there will be an announcement from government research showing that specific exercise at specific times during the day has a massive impact on a child's ability to learn. Quite frankly, there is a huge learning curve academically for us to go through in this country with regard to sport in general. Swimming is a very specialist case because of its safety issue, but also because of its particular nature. I shall just

tell a little anecdote here. My daughter is doing her first 25 metres, she is sinking, every parent knows the feeling, nose just above the surface, she sinks a bit further, periscope comes up and a snorkel, I am stripping off ready to jump in and save her and somehow she gets to the end, smiles from ear to ear and says "France at last". There is such a sense of achievement given to children in facing their fears and facing the change in environment because swimming assaults the senses in a way that no other sport does. It has particular lessons to be learned. The school has defined 25 metres as swimming. If there had been a ripple on the pool my daughter would have been at the bottom. If the pool had been ten degrees colder, she would have been on the bottom. If there had been a current she would never have reached the end. I do not know any sensible person who could sit down for very long and define 25 metres as learning how to swim. If you start that as our broad-based pyramid, then children are dumped in the pool and one private company offers a school that they will teach the children to swim 25 metres or their money back. You think of the incentive for that provider to sign the certificate to say the child has swum the 25 metres. It is outrageous. Quite apart from that, honourable Members, I learned survival skills. Thirty-four years later I was glad to help one of your members, Lord Sheldon, when he had a heart attack and I managed to give him mouth to mouth resuscitation and bring him back to life. Other skills are learned through swimming. Basically you have a major problem in changing the attitude of schools towards physical exercise and in particular swimming which we are debating here. You have discussed clubs. Clubs are about empowerment, empowering those coaches to do their jobs. At the moment you have a publicly owned facility usually run by a private contractor who will go for the profit. The child in the swimming club is pressed out to the edge, the profitable Learn to Swim scheme is poached from the club by the private contractor because it makes money. Therefore the clubs' earnings are squeezed to the point where it becomes like a mill. You have 25 kids in each lane, if a kid drops out of the top lane, they shunt them all up as quickly as possible, even though developmentally they may not be ready. You have a nightmare at clubs at the moment. Sport England—we talked about the environment—say we have enough pools. I run Swimathon, in which over 13 years we have had half a million people taking part. Let me tell you that there are about 1,200 publicly open pools which are open for lap swimming in this country; 1,200. That is all for a population of 60 million. I cannot even believe it. Their attitude is that there are enough pools out there at the moment. Are there enough pools out there at the moment? Maybe. I remember down in Kent that there were floods in 1968 and the water board said they had enough reservoirs for the country and it would be okay. When things improve and you do not have to walk through the urinals to get to the swimming pool and 50 per cent of the pools are like that, decaying and seedy, perhaps a lot more people may want to use them. I suggest that there will be a huge growth in swimming. Leadership. The Amateur Swimming Association have a great history. They are dedicated people, lots of wonderful people out there, but some of the members here have said, "Amateur Swimming Association? Who are you? Have you lobbied? No? Have you led? No". They are not ready structurally to run a modernised sport. If you look at Australia for instance, when they did not bring back a gold medal in 1976 it became a political agenda to win gold medals. They went around modernising sport and making it more executive with responsibilities to perform and get there. To sum up. At the moment, we have excellence, as a director of a pharmaceutical company said to me, like the Battle of the Somme. It is not the

talented, the courageous, the gifted who are left standing at the end. The ones who are left standing at the end just happened to be in the right place at the right time. It is all left to chance at the moment. What frustrates me the most is that the goal of winning gold medals is absolutely in step with every other element you have talked about within swimming. If you understand talent development fully, you understand that a parent who swims is more likely to have a child who swims. It is in our best interest as a sporting nation to get everybody swimming if gold medals are a goal. If one were out in space and looked down on this country with a dispassionate, objective view, you would look at our heritage—and if you have watched *Walking with Dinosaurs* and the like—this physical being which has managed to make it through all the obstacles, yet some of the physically gifted young children are pushed to train in a pool before anybody gets up and then if you come back in the evening, they will be swimming while every other child is in bed. That is the way we are treating our gifted young people in this country, which is slightly embarrassing to say the least as a nation. Swimming is the best all round sport for our health. It is the least discriminating, certainly in age and ability and it has the highest appeal in the nation. Some honourable Member here mentioned that we cannot afford to do it. Well, we are not a third rate country, we are not a third world country, we are the third largest economy in the world and we should darn well afford it.

Chairman

81. That sounds like the last sentence of our report actually.

(*Mr Goodhew*) I thought it was better said than written.

Derek Wyatt

82. Well said; very well said. What three things would you three want us to do for swimming? We have never had a report on swimming ever. This is the first to be done.

(*Ms Davies*) I was out commentating in Sydney, so I tend to get it from both sides, because I was disappointed for the swimmers, because I know how hard they work. Every single one of those swimmers was still swimming six hours a day, getting up at five o'clock and getting to bed at eleven. They did not want to go out there and not perform. We do need 50-metre pools; we do. We cannot expect them to race over 50-metres when we do not have that. When you compare us to other European nations and America and Australia the facilities we have in this country are pathetic.

83. That is one wish. What are the other two?

(*Ms Davies*) One other is that we have a better system in place to take young talent and to develop it, to point it in the right direction. We lose it. We find talent, people who can swim and then they get lost in the system somewhere because there is no system. The other is just to be pleased about excellence. We

seem to put it down. We do not seem to want to be the best. We want to be mediocre.

(Ms Lonsbrough) It took Australia 25 years to become the world's leading nation so things are not going to happen overnight. It is going to be long term. We need more facilities. We need better coaches and more money.

84. Duncan, you have said it all, but you can say it again if you like.

(Mr Goodhew) There is certainly a whole bunch more. That was just the opening. Seriously that is it. It is a very, very complex issue. I set up the Youth Sports Trust with £1 million from John Beckwith and £1 million from a sponsor and it has taken us since 1993 to get to the point where we have changed the first introduction to every child in primary schools. Those kids are now five years' old and it is another 15 years before they come onto the sporting horizon we are now talking about, gold medals. It takes a very, very long time. What I should like to see is a proper defined strategy at local levels, to understand. There is a lot of waste and duplication of resources. You have two clubs swimming in and fighting over the same water. You do not have a defined strategy of swimming at the local level. Really we have to trace the young person. We have to look to see what they need. Quite often these gifted individuals are good at many different sports, so that whole process needs managing. We have effectively to get local people who are very skilled at managing talent and that means that at the moment you can have a talented swimmer who can swim for the school and maybe play soccer for the school or something else. They swim for the local club, they swim for the county, they swim for the district and they might swim for England in the meantime. The parents are pulling out their hair going "Help. How do I cope with all of this?". It is a very difficult process to manage because everybody wants a divvy. Success has a thousand fathers, failure is an orphan. Everybody wants a part of that and that really does need sorting out. At the moment the sport is also a middle class sport and that is hurting our potential as a nation and it is not doing justice to the young people. That needs to be changed. Unless you have two cars, swimming is almost impossible.

85. Is it your perception after six years of the Lottery that we rely on the Lottery in sport rather than fighting the Treasury for funding for sport itself.

(Ms Davies) We have to realise that swimming is an expensive sport because of the cost of running the facility; not doing the sport but just giving us the facilities. Whereas with a football field, they can put on a pair of boots and just go out and play, that is not the case with swimming and you have to have these facilities. The difficulty is that the councils try to run a swimming pool and provide that facility at the same time as these other sports which are much cheaper to run, yet there are all these people who do want to swim. We have to accept that and that is something we have not done in the past. The other difficulty is about where the money comes from and it comes from this middle

group of people who want to go to swim in their lunchtime. Unless the facility is good enough from the local council, they are not, they are going to go down the road and go to Cannon's. The money is not going to come back into the public sector, it is going to go elsewhere. You have to make sure that our public facilities are good, because it is not going to create the turnover otherwise.

Ms Shipley

86. I want to take up what you were saying about the contracts. Previous evidence demonstrated that we have a real problem with the contracts by the sound of it, this squeezing out young people for financial gains. You touched on it as well more or less accusing—and I want you to clarify this—the private contractors to some schools shall we say, certainly not all, of being less than honest with their results.

(Mr Goodhew) I just said there would be an awful temptation just to make the last few yards. I did not level it as an accusation, I was just saying it was a profit motivation to sign a certificate.

87. I would assume from that, that in your experience you have noted that this is potentially happening or is happening.

(Mr Goodhew) There is a noticeable difference; the core skills are not laid down like they used to be, whether it is in water safety or swimming itself. Swimming is a skilled sport, it is more like tennis than any other sport, because you have to feel the water, you have to use the water, you have to develop skills within it. Learn to Swim in this country now is just getting through 25 metres and ticking the box. That is not investing in a life-long love of a sport and a concern for your own health and safety.

88. I must say I agree. This tick-box mentality without monitoring what it means is something which really concerns me. This whole thing about how we are getting good quality teaching to the children via these contracts and who is monitoring them and all of that is turning out to be a very, very dodgy area.

(Mr Goodhew) When Swim for Life was put forward—and it was an Amateur Swimming Association initiative so well done to them on that—and won, somewhere or other somebody had to define what swimming was. Unfortunately of course, not only did they say 25 metres, but some people, through disablement or whatever, for instance my son does not have ear drums so he cannot swim, so it cannot be put down in the statute book and they use the word "should" so people can find ways out of it.

89. It has been suggested to us that maybe the American model of excellence being linked to universities, locating a 50-metre pool in a university and that sort of thing would be a good way.

(Mr Goodhew) I went to an American university. They are fantastic. They are like Hoovers, they suck up talent. The reason they do is in the culture of America; certainly in men's sport, the place to be is at university on full scholarship. That is a great thing to happen and in fact they brought in women's

sport as well. The funding comes through American football. The American Football League recruits out of university, not out of primary school. The leading players are cultivated within university and my team for instance had an average gate of 48,000 people and that football revenue funded all the other sports.

90. How would you see disadvantaged youngsters, perhaps of not academic ability, finding their way up through that route?

(*Mr Goodhew*) In America it is a treadmill. They really pull the kids through and the university happens to be the level where they do that.

91. Do you think it is transferrable?

(*Ms Davies*) It is happening to a degree in Bath. We already have Bath as a very successful centre and we are talking about Loughborough which is also attached to the university. Maybe we do not need to attach them quite so closely only to universities; possibly they could be centres of excellence which are spread around the country so that you do not have to travel. I spent all of my youth training in a $33\frac{1}{3}$ -metre pool in Plymouth and my closest 50-metre pool was four hours away. We need to look at the country and work out where these centres should be so that youngsters can gravitate towards them. It does not have to be university based, or it does not have to be so that you can only use it if you are of university age. You can be at a very high level from very young. I went to my first Olympics at 13. I was not at university at that age. You still have to have those facilities.

(*Mr Goodhew*) The model which has been worked up for sport at the moment but it is in its infancy is that you take sports colleges, which are the technical colleges, secondary school age, and they form a cluster of secondary schools and within that they work through the cluster of primary feeder schools and they work out who does what within that arena. Those specialist sports colleges are linked to HE and FE colleges. There is a kind of seed of an idea of how we could make that work in this country. It is early days yet and it has lots of holes in, but we have funding for 250 sports colleges in England. That is only five per cent of schools in England. Quite clearly a lot of people will be left out of that process and it will not catch all the talent in this country.

(*Ms Davies*) What works well in Bath is not just swimming. We need to look at sport as a whole, not just swimming from the elite point of view. In Bath the pentathletes help each other, people involved in winter sports are there. They have the background and the physiological background is there for them as well. When you start looking at elite sport you can group sports together very well.

(*Ms Lonsbrough*) All this depends on funding of course. Water space is very, very expensive. We build a lot of nice 50-metre pools, but then it costs the swimmers an awful lot to go there. As far as the university system is concerned, it is improving. The universities have just had their most successful championships and we have Bath, Loughborough, Coventry and Stirling who are the leaders now in swimming. We do have to be careful that we do not set up too many centres which we cannot fund properly. It is not just about swimming in water, it is about all the other things, the medical, the diet and everything else which goes with sport in general now.

Mr Bryant

92. That is partly my worry. In my constituency, I have five swimming pools, two 20-metre ones, two 25-metre ones and one leisure pool. If anything, we probably have too many. There is a danger that we are spreading ourselves too thin and then not having the money to be able to keep them properly.

(Mr Goodhew) May I take issue with that? I was a Director of the Barbican Health and Fitness Centre. One of the things we did was spend a lot of money on promotion. The trouble is that you have a facility and you do not market it. All of us know we should exercise on a regular basis, you do not have to be a rocket scientist to figure that out. That is our bodies. However, we have to be encouraged, because it is hard work and the benefits are very gradual. Our public facilities are not marketed and not promoted to the community in the way they could be. I would wager that with effort you could make those work in a much more efficient way.

93. It is a Welsh local authority so it is not the business of here but it may be true that it has been spending most of its time marketing dryside activities rather than wet side. There maybe is a problem and you may want to comment on marketing generally but if you had £1 billion to spend suddenly on swimming, how would you allocate it between 50-metre pools, heritage pools such as the ones we heard about earlier and leisure pools? You have one billion.

(Ms Lonsbrough) We have to be careful not to do away with old pools and replace them with smaller facilities. If I take my own city of Wolverhampton, they are currently proposing to close a 25-yard pool and a 33¹/₃-metre pool and build a leisure pool. We have to make sure there are the facilities for our swimmers to learn to swim and to progress, not just into the competitive side of swimming but leisure, fitness, all these other things. It is a good sport for all ages. We have to cater for that and then we have to make sure that there are the development pools building up to the 50-metre pools. If we do not have the pools where we teach our swimmers to swim, we are not building the base and therefore our pyramid will never get any higher.

(Ms Davies) As I said, four hours away from a 50-metre pool, I hardly ever swam in one and still managed to do it. As long as you have water and you have access to it you can do it, but you do need the access to the water. We need to have a look at the country and work out a strategy and work out this big pyramid and enable people to go from one level to the next level without losing them on the way. I have seen so much talent over the years which has just not found its way through, usually because of lack of money, but lack of facilities as well. The Lottery has made a massive difference to the top in the fact that people can stay in the sport instead of getting to 18 and having nowhere to go unless they go to university which is what Duncan did.

(Mr Goodhew) Going back to your question, it depends on your political agenda. If winning gold medals is the agenda, then you knock down those pools because we used to fly across the Atlantic in Sunderland Flying Boats on PanAm. We now fly across in Jumbo jets. There have been developments in swimming pools. There is deck level, there is filtration, there are new materials which the

old-fashioned pools are not very well suited for and quite frankly we live in a different century. There may be very good cases for one or two of those pools to exist from a heritage point of view, but from a swimming point of view, there is very little argument for them at all. It is all passionate, it is all Wembley based. We have this pool which should be here and you have been through that already.

94. You mentioned Wembley and Australia has been mentioned a lot today. One of the big differences between Australia and here is the weather which presumably affects whether people choose to go swimming or not.

(Ms Davies) It is their attitude as well. They are brought up on water.

95. Indeed and they are very strange people. We were talking in our last report about the prospects of Olympic bids and how Australia had decided when they did particularly badly in the 1976 Olympics that right, their aim was now not to put in an Olympic bid but spend all their money on grassroot sport. Which way do you think Britain should go now?

(Mr Goodhew) That was not quite what happened. They built the Institute of Sport, spent a whole lot of money on it and then turned round and said only 500 people can go through the door, which 500? It was as though they had bought a gigantic star for the Christmas tree and then wondered what Christmas tree to put underneath it, Christmas tree being the sports development. Having such a big star they had to put up a big Christmas tree as well. They invested after that in the sports development. They started with the idea of making something at the top and then figured out that unless you get the probability right at the bottom, it is good for nothing.

96. In terms of our strategy for the next few years, lots of people in Britain would like us to be putting in an Olympic bid to host the Olympics in the next few years. Do you think that is a waste of time and effort at this particular stage?

(Mr Goodhew) Not really. At the moment we are going to have to repair an awful lot of damage done by Picketts Lock. You have to realise that it is an international community which demands respect. Going back and saying we cannot afford to have a stadium, or whatever the political row was behind it, and asking to move it to Sheffield, is hardly building confidence in the international community about our ability to deliver the Olympic Games.