

**BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT HEARING COMMISSIONER
APPOINTED BY THE HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of an application to demolish the Hamilton Municipal Pools

BETWEEN **HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL**
Applicant

AND **HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL**
Consent authority

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE
OF
DR ALISON HAMILTON
ON BEHALF OF
SINK OR SWIM**

Dated 28 October 2019

Sink or Swim

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INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Alison Jane Hamilton. I am a medical general practitioner with the following qualifications: MBBS, MRCP, FRNZCGP, Dip Obs.
2. I am a former national representative in rowing and triathlon for Ireland. I competed in the Commonwealth Games in these sports in 1986 and 1990 respectively. I am the current age group champion in the sprint triathlon at The World Masters and the NZ National Championships.
3. I am here today as a founding member of the SOS core group.
4. Before the Municipal Pools closed in 2012 I swam at the Munies as an elite triathlete, an age group triathlete and in Master's swimming squads. My children have been in learn to swim programmes there and swam at the Munis for their school swimming lessons and my eldest daughter progressed into Hamilton Swimming Club.

CODE OF CONDUCT

5. I acknowledge that as a member of Sink Or Swim I am not independent of it, so my evidence cannot necessarily be regarded as expert evidence. Nonetheless, I have read the Environment Court Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses, contained in the Environment Court's Practice Note 2014. I have complied with this practice note in preparing this statement of evidence. I confirm that the issues addressed in this brief of evidence are within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on the evidence of another person. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed. I have specified where my opinion is based on limited or partial information and identified any assumptions I have made in forming my opinions.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

6. The Hamilton City Council Municipal Pools is a valuable Hamilton city amenity and asset. When it was open, it provided many health benefits to the people of Hamilton, particularly those who work or live in the central city or surround suburbs, including NZ representative athletes. Swimming provides many health benefits, but outdoor swimming provides greater health benefits than indoor swimming. The Pool was the only publicly available heated outdoor lane-swimming pool in Hamilton that was open year-round. It was hugely popular and convenient to a large number of people daily, and should be made publicly available again.

7. Water safety is a serious concern in a country where beaches, lakes and rivers are easily accessible and part of our kiwi lifestyle.
8. Hamilton schools used the Municipal Pools extensively when the Pools were open and their demolition would deprive many school children of then benefit of learning to swim, school reward days and taking part in school swim sports day. Already a generation of Hamilton primary school children have missed out on swimming at the Muni Pools since it was closed in 2012.
9. Around the world, outdoor swimming is a valued activity and councils provide facilities for this. In climates ranging from Australia to Iceland, civilised nations boast an extensive network of outdoor pools. In the United Kingdom there has recently been a resurgence of interest in open air swimming, and several lido pools have been reinvigorated that had been left derelict by their councils for years. These Lidos are well utilised with the renewed interest in the community and health benefits of outdoor pools.
10. For these reasons, the Municipal Pools should not be demolished, but refurbished and reopened.

Outdoor swimming as exercise:

11. Outdoor swimming is an excellent exercise for many reasons and in particular :
 - Swimming is an excellent form of physical exercise as it is a non-jarring and uses all the muscle groups of the body.
 - It can be done at any age from the cradle to the grave.
 - It can be done by people of all shapes and sizes and abilities and disabilities.
 - It is a life skill which can help prevent drowning

Health benefits

12. The health benefits of swimming include:
13. Improved **aerobic fitness**. Exercising aerobically for at least 30 minutes three times per week:
 - reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease and helps reduce blood pressure
 - reduces the risk of developing diabetes and helps with the management of established diabetes
 - improves beneficial cholesterol levels
 - improves lung function, improves asthma control
 - improves weight control and lean to fat mass ratio
14. Swimming is a **non-weight bearing** sport so unlike weight bearing sports it is more accessible to people:

- with arthritis or sore and stiff joints
 - recovering from injuries or surgery
 - with obesity issues
 - who are pregnant
 - with disabilities
15. Swimming **uses all muscle groups** of the body so the training effect of swimming improves:
- overall muscle tone and strength
 - flexibility
16. Swimming improves **mental well being**. Exercising promotes the release of endorphins but the rhythmic breathing combined with the stretch and relaxation of muscles groups involved in swimming gives an additive effect.
17. Swimming improves **mental longevity**. A study from South Carolina showed that swimming improved longevity compared to non-active people or runners.
18. **Outdoor swimming has extra health benefits** compared with indoor swimming:
- improved vitamin D levels from exposure to the sun.
 - Vitamin D helps general health and bone and tendon strength
 - reduced exposure to disinfection by products of chlorine(DBP) due to the automatic ventilation of an open air pool. Numerous studies show that DBP are harmful irritants to the respiratory mucosa causing new onset of asthma and allergic rhinitis. This affects not only the swimmers but the indoor pool employees.
 - improved mental well being, additive on the effect of swimming exercise, due to being exposed to the elements and the Sun and connectivity with the environment.

Water Safety

19. The Municipal Pools are needed so that children can learn to swim.
20. According to Water Safety New Zealand, a total of 68 people drowned in New Zealand during 2018. So far in 2019, 46 people have already drowned. According to Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) chief executive Jonty Mills, as well as this, frontline emergency services reported a record number of rescues and lucky escapes.
21. Drowning is the third highest cause of accidental death in New Zealand, behind road vehicle crashes and falls.

22. Although a significant 71% of those that died in 2018 were men, children also featured prominently in the 2018 statistics. Five pre-schoolers (aged under five) drowned in 2018. Sadly, five preschoolers have already drowned this year.
23. As well as supervision, it is important to develop swimming skills at an early age to address this tragedy. This requires a ready availability of suitable pool space for school-led lessons, private tutored lessons, and for parents to teach their children to swim and develop water confidence. Some parents can't afford swimming lessons (or cars), so need to be able to get their children to a convenient venue by walking or public transport where they can teach them themselves.
24. The worst age-group for drowning this year so far is 15-24 year olds, with 9 drownings.
25. In 2018 beaches had the most preventable fatalities with 12 followed by rivers with 8. So far this year 15 people have drowned at beaches and 12 in rivers. Hamilton is the river city. Given the easy access to the river in Hamilton, it's important to do all we can to provide skills and education to prevent drownings.
26. Waikato had 6 drownings over the last year, and has already had 4 this year. It is the 5th highest region out of 15 for drownings (Tasman is counted in with Nelson). The Municipal pools, on the bank of the swift flowing Waikato River is an alternative for outdoor aquatic recreation. It also provides numerous schools with a water safety learning opportunity. It is an important facility given the disastrous drownings trend which must be addressed. For DrownBase Fact Sheets and further information visit www.watersafety.org.nz

Schools are at the heart of the city

27. Water safety New Zealand has identified schools as being able to: “....play a vital role” in ensuring children learn swim and survival skills, “....[this] is imperative from a drowning prevention perspective....” (taken from findings from a research study into school based aquatic education commissioned by Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ)).

Details of school use of Hamilton Municipal Pools

28. Schools use the Hamilton Municipal Pools for:

- water confidence
- swimming lessons
- physical education
- waterpolo training

- school sports and
- good behaviour rewards
- kayak training
- flippa ball

29. Several schools that are in walking distance used the Munis multiple times during the first and fourth terms, with Hamilton Boys' High and Marian having weekly bookings for waterpolo training. This is despite Boys' High having its own pool. This demonstrates the level of need that a single school can generate.

30. Note also that the Municipal Pools, perhaps because of its grandstand, appears to be the swimming facility of choice for some schools that are in close proximity to Waterworld and Gallagher Pools. There are also several schools from adjoining districts and further afield that use the Municipal Pools.

31. From a phone survey by Sink or Swim in 2012, the twenty-two schools that have used the Hamilton Municipal Pools in 2012 are listed below. We do not have the names of schools that used the pools in the last term of 2011 but the list will include many schools not included here. HCC staff have that information.

Hamilton Schools	Notes
Fairfield Primary	
Fraser High	
Glenview Primary	Gallagher Pools is closer
Hamilton Boys' High	have their own pool
Hamilton West Primary	
Hillcrest High	have their own pool
Marian Primary	
Melville High	Gallagher Pools is on their campus
Sacred Heart Girls College	
St Andrew's Middle School	Waterworld is closer
St Columba's Primary	
St John's College	
Vardon Primary	Waterworld is closer
Waikato Waldorf School	Waterworld is closer
Woodstock Primary	Waterworld is closer
Out of town schools	
Hilltop School, Taupo	Taupo has several modern bathing facilities
Horsham Downs Primary	
Puketaha Primary	
St Patrick's Primary, Te Awamutu	Te Awamutu has a modern swimming complex

Tamahere Model Country School
Te Pahu School
Waikaretu School, Huntly

32. The reasons for usage as cited by schools were:

- excellent large grandstand
- within walking distance from schools
- easy access
- perfect setting with lots of seating
- outdoors, no fumes to breath in
- helpful staff
- starting blocks
- grass area
- has a covered area that shelters the students on a hot day.
- It is well fenced and students can't leave without permission, nor can strays come in without permission.
- The pool is cleaner as it has less "traffic" in it.
- There is also an area where we can set up our computers
- the supporters/swimmers are closer to the pool so they get to be involved more with the swimmers in the pool.
- Parking of buses to drop off and pick up students is easier than at Waterworld too.
- Able to book out the whole pool and have it for the whole day
- Cheaper than Waterworld
- The pool is a lot warmer and more inviting than Waterworld or Gallaghers

33. The overall results of the survey undertaken by Sink or Swim show the following:

- 78% of the pools who participated in the survey did not have a pool at their school.
- All of those schools that had pools still needed the use of an additional pool facility to meet their students' needs.
- 100% of the schools declared it would affect their school if the Municipal Pools were to be closed.

34. Schools play a pivotal role in providing the best possible outcomes for children within this region. Therefore we conclude that for schools to be able to provide the best possible outcomes for tamariki, the Municipal Pools which serves at least 22 schools must be kept open, maintained and appreciated for the vital role it performs in providing the opportunity in equipping children with swim skills.

Lido Pools

35. I travel frequently to the UK to visit family and friends, and am familiar with many of its outdoor pools, some of which I swam in as a child. Wherever I travel, whether to the

UK or other countries, I try to obtain accommodation that has a 25 m pool or is near such a pool so that I can readily continue my swimming regime.

36. The UK has approximately 40 public outdoor pools, generally referred to as Lidos. Some are heated and some contain sea water. In the last 15 years, at least 20 Lidos that had been closed have been refurbished and reopened. This has often been the result of public campaigns including celebrities such as the rock star Sting in the case of the Tynemouth Outdoor Pool. These pools have become hugely popular with locals and tourists. Iceland also has many outdoor pools despite the climate.

37. This demonstrates the level of interest the general public have in the benefits of outdoor swimming, and the sort of facilities councils should provide for the benefit of their communities. This does not just include the health benefits for the locals, but the commerce generated by enhancing the visitor experience or making a locality a great place to live.

38. Below are photos of just five such renovated lido pools: Jubilee Pool Penzance (top left); Tooting Bec Lido, London (top right); Tinside Lido, Plymouth (middle left); London Fields Lido, Hackney (middle right) and Sandford Park Lido, Cheltenham (bottom). They illustrate what could and should be done with the Municipal Pools site.





39. In addition to the usual benefits of a Lido Pool, the Sandford Park Lido goes out of its way to provide an extensive list of community services. This list is attached as Appendix 1, showing the range of services a forward-thinking facility can deliver.

Summary

40. There are many benefits to swimming and in particular to swimming outdoors. As the Municipal Pool is heated it is useable year round. It adds to the opportunity for wellbeing of the citizens of the city to have an option of using an outdoor pool in our land locked city. It adds to the vitality of living and working in the CBD. It's a "healthy choice" venue for schools to utilise for school sports in terms of its outdoor benefits. This is unique to the Municipal pools and sets it apart from the other swim facilities in the city. The city will be a less vibrant place without it and the benefits of retaining it are real and highly worthwhile.

41. Until they closed, the Hamilton Municipal Pools were heavily used by schools in the first and last term of each year and are the pools of choice for many reasons. Without them many schools have been be unable to maintain their aquatic needs. HCC needs to provide this basic and essential facility to ensure the water safety of our children and to help service the aquatic needs of schools.

42. The Municipal Pools are needed for the community to have a safe swimming space where people can learn to swim.

43. New Zealand needs to support people being active, this improves health and wellbeing. A city without facilities such as this is less of a place to live. We need to cherish facilities that enhance our lives despite some costs being involved.

CONCLUSION

44. The consent application to demolish the Hamilton Municipal Pools and replace them with grass does not serve the health, water safety and education and amenity needs of Hamilton City residents and should be declined.

Sandford Parks Lido – Our role in the community

This document demonstrates the public benefit, goodwill and social value Sandford Parks Lido contributes to the community and the important part it plays.

Our ethos is to maintain Cheltenham Borough Council's objectives back in 1935, which were to improve the health and wellbeing of their community and to ensure the lido was available to everyone. We believe this is just as important today. We strive to serve all of our community.

We ensure access for as many people as we can with reduced entry and hire fees for those on low/supported income with concession prices for the following members of our community:

- Low income Families
- Disabled people
- Students
- Over 63's
- We offer reduced season ticket prices to armed forces personnel and NHS employees
- Free baby and toddler swimming sessions in the small pool
- Once a year we reduce the entry fee to the original sum of 2p.
- We maintain low hire fees to ensure local clubs, charities and schools can access the facility. We offer the hire of the lido to them at a reduced rate to enable them to effectively raise funds for their organisation

We offer free entry to:

- Carers of people with health conditions or impairments
- Good causes such as charity fundraisers and school raffles
- We support the fundraising initiatives of local schools by providing free swimming passes
- We provide 40 free season tickets to Cheltenham Swimming & Water Polo Club to give support for talented young people, giving them the opportunity to train for free

- We allow CSWPC to stage their nation annual championships at their lido. We close to the public on these occasions and this has a significant effect on our income and community satisfaction. We chose to give this opportunity to our local swimming club
- We offer free entry to National Citizen service groups for sponsored swims
- We provide free playing space for St John's school. They do not have a playing field and have an arrangement with us for their children to come across town and run around our lawns and use our play equipment during their lunch breaks

We support organisations and charities, enabling mutually supportive partnerships:

- RNLI free water safety education talks and activities
- Weekly private training sessions for ARRC Support Battalion Innsworth at cost.
- We support Gloucestershire Police in their community initiatives ie. free bike coding for community, free advice and walking around our site and meeting our community
- Free water training venue for Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue throughout the year. Both Cheltenham and Gloucester fire stations use this.
- We aim to use local suppliers where possible
- We actively support seven local charities by raising their profile and including them in our fundraising initiatives. We offer the hire of the lido to them at a reduced rate or free to enable them to effectively raise funds for their organisation ie. LINC (Triathlon), Cobalt (Devil's), Pied Piper (Junior Aquathlon), Maggie's (private weekly swim session plus reduced rates for patients), Winston's Wish (Sunrise Swim), Heidi's Heroes (free swim session), Macmillan (sponsored swim)
- We provide parking for staff, patients and visitors to the hospital

Our volunteers give their time/hours at events: We offer opportunities for volunteering, supporting and encouraging volunteering. We feel this is so important for a sense of wellbeing and to give something back to our community:

- Students from Gloucestershire University volunteered to develop a creative corner in the children's pool
- We run our own volunteer scheme consisting of over 30 individuals who regularly help out at our events
- Our volunteers do all the flower arrangements and weeding all season to keep the site looking its best

We promote sport, fitness, culture and health in the community by running courses, classes and encouraging other community groups and clubs to use our facilities:

- We provide land based and water based classes at many levels ie. circuits, swim fit, aqua, yoga, pilates, running
- We provide specific sport competition opportunities for many levels ie. swimming, triathlon, aquathon
- We provide a base for our local clubs to train ie Cheltenham Triathlon Club, Cheltenham Canoe Club, Cheltenham Swimming & Water Polo Club
- Clubs from outside the area travel to us to train ie. Pershore Swimming Club juniors, Gloucester Masters seniors
- We provide a venue for Duke of Edinburgh training
- We provide a training facility for professional sports clubs ie Gloucester RC and Cheltenham Town FC
- GE Aviation Systems 'Health Ahead Day' - promoting activities as an encouragement for GE employees to get involved and improve physical and mental health and wellbeing
- We stage regular cultural events ie. theatre, cinema and music

We are recognised as being nationally significant. Our visitors come from afar and contribute to Cheltenham as a tourist venue:

- We are on the national list of most important historic buildings. Historic England have given us a grade II listing status recognising our importance as a complete ensemble of lido buildings, together with our plant room that is uniquely important for its original machinery
- We are the only official open air olympic sized 50m pool in the UK and were honoured to be used as a training facility for the 2012 Olympic Games
- Cheltenham Swimming & Water Polo Club use the lido to stage local and national competitions, bringing visitors to Cheltenham from all over the UK
- We are a certified training facility for the Royal Life Saving Society UK
- We stage a hugely successful dog swim weekend which brings many visitors from all over the UK to Cheltenham.
- We stage regular participative competitions, bringing many visitors to Cheltenham from all over the UK ie. marathon swim, triathlons, aquathons

We make a specific contribution to local and national health and wellbeing targets and are actively promoting the lido as a place to enhance our community's health and wellbeing and offer activities supporting these benefits. We offer tailored programmes that we run for a specific audience and that support community development:

- NHS skin care nurses provide healthcare advice and checks during the summer
- Pilates
- Pilates with baby
- Aqua classes (low impact class for those who may not be able to partake in high impact activities)
- Baby and toddler swimming sessions in the small pool free of charge
- Swimming lessons and Learn to swim courses for adults and children
- Introduction to waterpolo for children
- Free water safety talks for children
- We offer private weekly swim session for people who attend Maggie's plus reduced rates for patients)
- Rookie Lifeguard course for children
- National Pool Lifeguard Qualification
- Emergency first aid at work
- Save a Baby workshop.
- We offer a private swimming session for those recovering from cancer treatment
- We offer a safe environment for our community to sit quietly or to socialise. We have many people who come in almost every day who are lonely for a variety of reasons. Often, they are not here to swim but to be part of our community. We welcome them wholeheartedly

We have a positive relation with local and national organisations to help us towards being able to offer a full and inclusive facility and programme:

- Active Gloucestershire
- Community Leisure UK
- Learning Disability Partnership Board
- Sport England
- Swim England
- Historic England
- Landscape Institute

- Friends of Sandford Park

We offer outreach work to our community and many organisations:

- We offer talks to many uniformed organisations and community groups giving them information about the lido and encouraging them to visit and come and train with us to become a lifeguard
- We provide heritage tours to local organisations
- We actively promote our heritage by taking part in the National Heritage Weekend
- We are constantly being asked to share our experiences and advice within other organisations. We work with other lidos around the country, to share best practice and provide guidance
- We are regularly asked to speak at national conferences.

We value our workforce team enormously and are committed to providing opportunities for young people in education and training:

- We employ 84 part time staff and 6 full time
- We provide a commitment to continuing professional development and training
- We involve our team in decision making
- We provide work placements for local schools, colleges and the National Star College
- We work with Glos County Council Forwards Employment Service to provide employment opportunities to adults with additional needs
- We run courses aimed specifically at young people such as the Rookie Lifeguard course
- We provide opportunities for career progression and steps to employment. Many who attend here on work placement apply for a seasonal job. A number then work their way through the roles from being a general attendant through to lifeguard, then pool supervisor, duty manager and senior manager.
- We employ a number of young people under the age of 18 who are carefully trained, nurtured and included in professional and social activities
- We are about to embark on an apprenticeship training programme

The trustees of Sandford Parks Lido who run the facility are all volunteers. They contribute to the community by giving their time and skills free.