

# **Edinburgh Leisure venues could be at risk of closure – read the list here**

**Edinburgh council-owned sports centres, swimming pools and pitches which could face closure have been revealed.**

Portobello Swim Centre and pitches at Meggetland Sports Complex are among Edinburgh Leisure venues included on a 'closure list' of potential venues which could be affected if additional council funding is not found.

Across the eight facilities at risk there are 160 people currently employed, with 85 full time and 75 part time staff members.



The arms-length organisation is facing a £3.6m black hole in its finances due to increased energy costs, inflation and other factors such as the introduction of non-domestic rates on pitches.

CEO June Peebles has said she “fears for public leisure services” amid the grim financial backdrop. While being “committed” to keeping “all our venues open,” she said there were “no easy solutions”.

The stark list – drawn up as part of 2024/25 financial planning and shared with the Local Democracy Reporting Service – sets out the potential closures which would save just under £2m in a bid to bridge the gap.

**All Edinburgh Leisure venues being considered for closure are:**

- Outdoor pitches and pitch venues at Niddrie’s Jack Kane Sports Centre, Meggetland Sports Complex and Saughton Sports Complex
- Portobello Swim Centre

- Kirkliston Leisure Centre
- Leisure facilities at Wester Hailes High School
- Gracemount Leisure Centre
- Glenogle Swim Centre, Stockbridge

A council source said: "The situation is so grave that Edinburgh Leisure have even identified eight sites they would close and hand the keys back to Edinburgh Council."

They added the council would have to increase its funding settlement for Edinburgh Leisure by a "seven-figure sum" if the looming closures are to be avoided.

However the council will struggle to hand over significant additional sums needed to keep centres open as it looks to close its own budget gap of more than £10m when councillors agree spending and savings proposals for the year ahead next month.

Other options being considered by Edinburgh Leisure include increasing charges by up to eight per cent and reducing opening hours, the report to the council's Policy and Sustainability Committee said.

A report to the council's policy and sustainability committee this week said while the "net benefits" of venue closures were "not certain" it was estimated achieving a £1m saving "would require the closure of approximately six wet / dry sport centres".

In a statement Ms Peebles said: "The financial challenges facing the organisation in 2024/25 are significant. Inflation continues to affect our cost base and we have estimated a £750,000 increase in energy costs; meaning our gas and electricity costs in 2024/25 will be £2.75m higher than pre pandemic levels.

"We're also having to meet additional costs due to the

introduction of non-domestic rates on pitches / green spaces and increases in water / drainage charges.

“I do fear for public leisure services and, more importantly, the health and well-being of our citizens.

“The contribution physical activity makes to people’s physical, mental and social health and well-being is well documented, indeed it is referred to by many as a ‘miracle pill’.

“Meanwhile our national health service is under considerable pressure – surely as a country we should be doing all that we can to support people of all ages to be active and keep them out of doctor’s surgeries and hospitals. Investing in physical activity is effective and far less costly than many other health interventions.

“To date, due to the support from the City of Edinburgh Council, partner organisations and our customers, Edinburgh Leisure has avoided any closures or significant reductions in service.

“We are committed to doing everything in our power to continue supporting the health and well-being of the city, keep all our venues open, and work towards paying the Real Living Wage.

“However, as evidenced in the report delivered to the Policy and Sustainability Committee, there are no easy solutions to these financial challenges. Meanwhile we continue to work with the City of Edinburgh Council to safeguard the health and well-being of our City.”

## **Edinburgh Leisure issued clarification on the matter.**

The list comes from a ‘2024/25 Financial Planning’ presentation to the Edinburgh Leisure board. The slide from

which the eight venues are taken from is headed as 'Venue Closures' with the sub-heading 'Review of bottom line position & consideration of lifecycle requirements to inform withdrawal of services'.

Ms Peebles said: "The list of venues(as detailed in your article) was put together for a Board presentation to illustrate the magnitude of the financial challenges the organisation is facing in 2024/25 and not for decision making purposes.

"The information was prepared to emphasise significant venue closures would not address the estimated funding gap."