

PRESENTATION FOR COUNCIL – 19.11.08

Good afternoon.

My name is Sally Cieslik and I am here on behalf of Splashback!, the campaign to keep South Leeds Sports Centre and its pool open. My colleague here is Phil Goodfield who also resides in South Leeds and is a member of the campaign group too,

It is hard to believe that we are having to go through this whole process again following the success of our first campaign Splash! less than two years ago.

We all want Leeds to be a modern, healthy and progressive city. This will only be achieved if everyone, wherever they live, has equal opportunity to reach their potential. This should include South Leeds - specifically - Beeston, Holbeck and Hunslet - areas of the city that have until recently been under resourced and neglected.

Where, along with the long-term residents, new arrivals to the city, transient families and the disadvantaged, live.

Families in this part of the city need to be able to access amenities locally to be healthy. We have the smallest ratio of cars to people in the country and many residents may not even be able to afford bus fares for anything other than essential trips. If you were in that position and wanted to give

your children the best opportunity you could then - alongside a good education - you would want them to learn to swim and play organised sports with other local children. These skills stay with us throughout life and keep us fit and healthy into an independent old age.

It is a fact that if you feel fit you are more likely to think positively and be successful in life. Life expectancy in South Leeds is the lowest in the city, obesity is rising and some of the children are amongst the poorest.

How can you say you are improving outcomes for young people when you are actively promoting the closing of a centre like this? We would argue that you're not "Narrowing the Gap" – you're widening it. Beeston, Holbeck and Hunslet are bereft of any other community sports facility or pool.

It looks to us as though the maxims for South Leeds differ from those for the rest of the city – or indeed the country – rather than *No Child Left Behind* and *Every Child Matters* ours seem to be *Every Child Left Behind* and *No Child Matters* at least so far as sport and fitness go.

We don't have the private pools like those that are dotted all over the north of the city. We don't have schools with pools that can be opened to the public. We don't have big

companies with facilities that workers families and locals can access.

We do, as we all know, have a fantastic facility for the elite swimmers and divers from our region. That's great for them, but it doesn't provide the fun and friendly swim for young and old alike... and it is likely to be closed when Olympic hopefuls come from all over the country for galas and competitions.

These would more than likely take precedence over "everyday" school and community sessions. Big events like these do add kudos to the city's national sporting profile, but this doesn't necessarily impact positively on the local communities' sports access.

South Leeds has had its share of nationally and internationally renowned sportsmen and women over the years.

If you ask any of them about how they became involved in their chosen sport, they would probably say that they started by playing for fun near to where they lived.... and that their initial access to coaching and training was through membership of local junior clubs and activity sessions laid on at a sport centre close by.

You won't find many who started out by scraping together pocket money to occasionally have enough cash to take the bus (or maybe even two) on a journey that took at least forty minutes (or maybe longer if the bus missed), to visit a pool or sports centre costing them yet more money, and then having to repeat the process to get home again.

Its not very appealing is it?...

as a parent it doesn't feel very safe does it?

as a supporter of the planet's future it's not wonderful either –

and as a way of engaging in sport and fitness its not going to be something you would be doing very regularly.

Therefore rather than closing South Leeds Sports Centre we need to be improving and building on to it.

This facility, by the Council's own admission, is "tired" and needs bringing into the 21st Century and we're almost a tenth of the way through it already.

Millions and millions of pounds are earmarked to regenerate areas of South Leeds, with projects such as the Holbeck Urban Village, Hillside and the Greenhouse. That's great news. But surely as part of that plan there will have to be sports and swimming facilities?

We don't see closing the sports centre as an option for an area like ours - that would be detrimental to whole community. We, unlike you, can't even contemplate this action. We see improvement as the only way forward.

We want to go down in history as a group who are involved in sustainable and lasting improvements to facilities in our local area.

We're disappointed that the council don't appear to want to do the same.

Thank you.

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