



Cathal Brugha

Swimming & Water Polo Club



To: Belfast City Council – Leisure Transformation Programme Consultation

From: Cathal Brugha Swimming & Water Polo Club

Cathal Brugha Swimming and Water Polo Club have been in existence since 1932 and have enjoyed a very positive working relationship with Belfast City Council over all of the intervening years.

We are a very successful water polo Club operating out of both Falls and Andersonstown Leisure Centre. We have water polo teams (male & female) competing at local and National level at all age groups from Under 10's to Senior and have many Ireland international players at various age levels, including the current Ireland Teams Men's and Women's Captains.

Belfast City Council is to be commended on their commitment to invest £105m over the next 10 years in the City's Leisure Centre infrastructure. The Cathal Brugha Club has attended consultation events and made written submissions in the past, as our contribution towards the Council's Leisure Transformation Programme consultation process and we now offer the points below, primarily relating to swimming facilities, for consideration by Belfast City Council:

Andersonstown Leisure Centre

1. Good to see 25m x 6 lane pool with floating floor however of course we would have preferred the 25m x 8 lane pool now earmarked for the Robinson Centre to be located at Andersonstown, where historically there has been the highest swimming participation, schools swimming and swim lesson programme in the City.
2. Only 50 spectators seating is disappointing and it looks like single line seating is to be located on the floor above the pool area and probably behind glass (similar to Falls and Grove). This may be aesthetically pleasing from an architectural design point of view however it is **definitely not** a 'user friendly' arrangement, as already experienced at Falls & Grove, with far too few spectators being placed behind plate glass and physically separated from the activity they wish to view. All parents/grandparents like to see their children enjoy sport and to place these people behind glass, far away from the pool action devalues the whole participation/spectator experience
3. Belfast City Council will be aware that problems with spectator accommodation not meeting the needs of users has previously been the subject of prolonged discussion amongst user groups and elected Councillors in relation to the Grove Wellbeing Centre. This resulted in the Council examining options to retrofit more acceptable spectator arrangements, however creating the necessary modifications proved an impossible task, given the physical structures in place within the final built structure. Therefore, we would ask the Council to please deal appropriately with this matter now, before the facility is built!
4. Spectator seating should where possible have unrestricted viewing access (not placed behind plate glass) and should be at the very least 150 seats for water based activities e.g. water based birthday parties, fun sessions, swim lessons, schools gala's, water polo matches, lifesaving events, Council holiday scheme events & promotions etc., which are all part of regular swimming pool activities at most pool locations.

5. From an operational perspective, there is a need to install a net curtain or other separation arrangement, particularly between the 25m pool and the Leisure Pool and also between the 25m pool and what appears to be a glass wall (Andersonstown Road end)and perhaps also between the 25m pool and the Learner Pool to ensure that water polo balls, fun day play items etc., do not stray towards these areas from the 25m pool, although this looks the more challenging item given the current pool hall design.
6. Additionally, there would appear to be a break in the side wall of the pool tank (changing room side); presumably this is an access/egress point, however this should be designed in such a way as not to interfere with the pool lines either above or below water level e.g. capable of being 'sectioned off' to create a pool lane border with no steps protruding under the water level which would provide a kicking hazard for swimmers and water polo players.
7. From a water polo perspective, we would like to be consulted on matters such as installation of match timing equipment (see wireless system at Falls Leisure Centre), accommodation arrangements for fitting of water polo goal posts etc., on the pool deck end & side and lastly arrangements for Club storage of water polo equipment e.g., balls, training aids etc.
8. Finally, in terms of the management of this new build project from a caring for customers perspective, we will be keen to receive confirmation that our Tuesday evening junior water polo session, which has been in place since the Andersonstown Leisure Centre opened in 1979, will be accommodated within the new leisure centre and also to learn what interim arrangements can be made to provide alternative pool time during the period of construction in order to help prevent our long established Club from disintegrating due to a lengthy break in the continuity of our Andersonstown session.

Robinson Centre

1. An Aquatics Centre of Excellence is a great idea and the provision of an 8 lane pool with adequate spectator accommodation is very much welcomed, as is the diving/learner pool with floating floor.
2. As an aquatics Centre of Excellence our assumption is that water polo will be fully promoted and accommodated at this venue, with pool hall design features fully compliant with water polo requirements i.e. wireless timing/scoring board system, LEN compliant pitch and pool markings, training equipment, suitable refereeing arrangements i.e. sufficient space/sight lines etc., P.A. system, junior water polo equipment (mini polo) and decking fixtures to accommodate end and side pool goals. Representatives of the Cathal Brugha Club and indeed of the wider water polo community remain available to offer advice on all of the above items.
3. Similar to Andersonstown, both pools appear to have an access/egress bay which could potentially be a hazard in relation to provision of swim lanes/water polo
4. A net curtain separating the 25m pool from the diving pool is essential to prevent water polo balls etc., from crossing between the two pools and thus causing a hazard to users....similar arrangement should be in place to protect any glazed areas around the pool.
5. From a water polo perspective, we would like to be consulted on matters such as installation of match timing equipment (see Falls Leisure Centre), accommodation arrangements for fitting of water polo goal posts etc., on the pool deck end & side and lastly arrangements for Club storage of water polo equipment e.g., balls, training aids etc.

6. Should Andersonstown design remain unchanged then the Robinson Centre will be the only pool in Belfast which could host swimming & water polo competitions, therefore adequate access (training & competition) for Clubs such as Cathal Brugha is critical.

Brook Activity Centre

1. This is obviously a much smaller facility than either Andersonstown or Robinson, however Belfast City Council are to be commended in establishing swimming facilities in this area.
2. The Cathal Brugha Club remain as always would be very keen to access this facility for swimming training.

Finally, in order that we, as an amateur sports Club, may plan ahead; we would very much appreciate receiving regular updates from the Council in relation to progress of Leisure Transformation Project or indeed any plans the Council may have with regard to our temporary displacement from Andersonstown Leisure Centre during the proposed works.



Phil Kelly, Director of Development & Marketing

Cathal Brugha Swimming & Water Polo Club

23rd September 2016

Tel: 07919368577 www.cathalbrughawaterpolo.com info@cathalbrughawaterpolo.com