



Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
The Treasury
1 Horseguards Road
Whitehall
SW1A 2AX

10th January 2022

Dear Chancellor of the Exchequer,

Energy Bills Discount Scheme - statement 9th January

I refer to my letter from my Vice-Chair on 15th December, making the case for the inclusion of the community leisure sector in any continued support for the period from April onwards in respect of massively increased energy bills. As I made clear, continuing support was necessary to prevent a collapse in community leisure provision.

As he wrote: "The UK's community leisure sector is in peril. Many of the leisure trusts which operate the swimming pools, gyms, theatres and more which are central to communities across the country are walking a financial tightrope. Any mis-step could tip them into financial crisis, to the detriment of the physical and mental wellbeing of those who rely on them as well as on the economies of the areas they serve. Collectively, this could leave us with a huge hole in national life."

The statement made on January 9th therefore came as a major shock to our members. Whilst we welcome acknowledgement within the statement that libraries, museums and visitor attractions have been identified as deserving the higher level of financial support, it is shocking that there was no specific individual mention of swimming pools. Whilst some will, we would hope, qualify as being located in historical buildings (although we would appreciate a clearer definition of "historical"), others would clearly make a case for being classified as visitor attractions.

However, the failure to designate swimming pools as a sector worthy of designation as part of the ETII scheme is a fundamental omission. Our members running swimming pools and public leisure facilities are intensive energy users, due to the requirement to maintain ambient temperature and heat swimming pool water, and yet their only ability to raise additional funds to cover escalating


energy costs is through user charges, impacting disproportionately on the most vulnerable in society. We would seek your clarification and explanation for their omission from the list.

We appreciate that there are significant financial constraints, and that priority cannot be given to every sector, however, with the threat of wide ranging closure of public leisure facilities, we are very disappointed at their exclusion from your list.

This coming year is going to be exceptionally challenging for our members, whether they operate purely in community leisure, or also provide cultural, library or other services. However, public leisure, with its public health benefit, must not be left to wither. The widespread closure of community swimming pools across the country will be the inevitable result.

I would ask you to consider our further request for clarification as a matter of urgency and would be pleased to meet with you or your officials to further discuss the issues our sector faces.

Yours sincerely,


PP

Phil Rumbelow
Chair
Community Leisure UK