

# The London Aquatic Centre – Legacy Use



The ASA (the English Governing Body for swimming) considers that the London Aquatic Centre will provide an elite facility for the 2012 Games themselves, and afterwards will become a premier swimming venue for the nation's capital.

This paper outlines the vision for the Aquatic Centre. Please email [facilities@swimming.org](mailto:facilities@swimming.org) for more information.

1 The London Aquatic Centre, which will be one of the major facilities left in the Olympic Park following the Games, will be the premier swimming facility in the UK and will give London, as befits one of the world's leading cities, swimming facilities second to none in Europe.

## Legacy Mode

2 Unlike many of the swimming facilities built for previous Olympics, which have been little used after the games, the design of the Aquatic Centre is based upon the technical swimming and diving requirements for the games with certain of the other specific requirements for the Games being added as a temporary "overlay" and being dispensed with after the Games.

In summary the Centre in legacy mode will have the following

- a 50m by 10 lane competition pool with a depth of 3m with a moveable floor and bulkhead and permanent spectator seating for 2,500 with an ability for this to be expanded to 3,500 when required,
- in the same hall as the competition pool a 25m by 21m diving pool with a moveable floor providing a range of platforms and spring boards to Olympic and World Championship standards,
- a separate 50m by 8 lane training pool with a depth of 2m and 2 moveable floors and bulkheads,
- ancillary matters including timing, scoreboard with video recording and playback, and areas for changing, catering, dryland training and provision for sports science and will meet the requirements of the various swimming disciplines.



3 One important feature of the new pool will be its potential to contribute as the Aquatic Academy to the training and retention of the Industry workforce as our training centre for coaches and teachers. The industry has told us that we need over the next 5 years to double our training provision in this area if we are to deliver the important growth in participation and achieve the results we all need and this facility can in due course make a significant contribution to this work.

4 In addition to these swimming facilities, which will support training regimes, competition programmes and community swimming including the teaching of swimming in Legacy mode the centre will also include an extension which will be added after the games and provide

- a large health and fitness area
- subject to finance a leisure area including dry as well as wet play facilities.

5 Overall the London Aquatic Centre can play a major role in building a more active and healthier community in the East end of London.

#### Legacy use

6 Whilst it would be an exaggeration to say that there is a Master Plan for the Legacy use of the Aquatic Centre it should be said that considerable discussion and planning has already taken place centred upon the need to ensure that the potential of the facility is fully explored and that it becomes a focus for not only the development of swimming but also an important focus for the population in the East of London.

7 As befits a building with swimming at its core it is envisaged that the Aquatic Centre will become the London Region Swimming Centre of Excellence for training and development programmes in swimming, disabled swimming, diving, synchronised swimming and water polo, forming a central point into which selected World Class Development Athletes feed from London, East Anglia and the South East of England.

8 Additionally the facilities provided will make the Aquatic Centre a national venue for high level competition events in all the various disciplines of swimming as well as regional, county and other swimming competitions and with the spectator seating expanded to 3,500 will be suitable for major international events including the European Championships and the I P C World Disability Swimming Championships and as a support venue for the holding of the World Swimming Championships.



9 Further we envisage the Aquatic Centre being linked into the Institute of Swimming, which would have its headquarters there and providing a National Swimming Academy located in the Olympic Park, but primarily based upon the Aquatic Centre, which will provide a comprehensive coach education and training programme in swimming and health as well as covering aspects of facility management and linking into the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence scheme. This Academy would in turn link to the emerging National Coaching Academy Network and the Sector Skills Academy.

10 Lastly we believe the combination of the various facilities and the activities which make up the ASA vision of the Aquatic Centre gives the ideal opportunity to develop a National Centre which links the sport of swimming into the life of the people in the area and into the Government's agenda in terms of social inclusion, increasing activity, combating obesity and improving health. Indeed establishing the facility as a Beacon of excellence for the UK and the World.

#### London Region Centre of Excellence

11 The London Region, with a population in excess of 7 million, presently lags behind the rest of the UK in terms of the number of athletes who reach international status in all the swimming disciplines. Whilst efforts are already being made to address this, the Aquatic Centre in legacy mode, should ensure that post the Olympic Games London will have a facility which will ensure that progress is maintained and that London's representation at international level will continue to increase.

12 In order to ensure that this will happen we believe the following are the pool time requirements for the various swimming disciplines which we believe can be linked into an overall swimming and health and fitness programme for the centre which will benefit the whole of the local community.

13 The combination of pools which will be provided and the dry land training facilities will allow the centre to be the base for the following level of squads in swimming, disability swimming, diving, synchronised swimming and water polo:-

- Elite – require early morning and afternoon sessions daily
- Elite youth – require early morning and afternoon sessions daily
- Feeder clubs and groups – require up to 5 evenings per week
- Training Camps – clubs and groups at weekends and during school holidays

#### Competition Venue



14 The Aquatic Centre will be used for events over a continuum ranging from those of international status down to events (designated meets) promoted by clubs at which the times recorded by swimmers are recognised for entry to Regional and National events. The importance of this latter type of event can be seen by the fact that it is not unknown for such a meet to receive 10,000 or more applications for entry with some 7,000 having to be turned down because only 3,000 could be accepted for the two day event.

15 However, the use for events will need to be carefully controlled in order that it does not impinge upon training where interruption in schedules, particularly at certain stages in the year, could have a retrograde effect on performance or on the availability of the pools for members of the public.

### Community Use

16 Whilst the London Aquatic Centre has been designed to meet the exacting requirements of staging the swimming events in the London Olympics, a primary consideration has been to ensure that in Legacy Mode it not only continues to meet swimming competition and training needs but also becomes an integral part of community life in the East End of London.

17 The competition and training pools in the Centre have all been designed with flexibility of use in mind, providing for many more activities than just swimming alone. The design in Legacy mode also includes the inclusion of a leisure area with its water areas and water features as well as dry play facilities and this combination allows the programming of the Centre to cater for the swimming needs of the whole community.

18 The leisure water is a requirement of the five Olympic Boroughs with Newham, the lead in this matter, prepared to make a substantial fixed capital contribution towards the development and construction. The contribution to be subject to an agreement which protects the interest of Borough with a commitment for the continuing operation of the leisure facility and the securing of access by Newham residents at discounted rates without a commitment by the Borough to revenue funding.

19 The addition of a health and fitness area which includes studios, exercise and fitness rooms, saunas and spas is seen to be helping to underpin the viability of the centre by adding further attractions to the total programme for the centre and has implications for the Government's Health Agenda. There has been discussion regarding Health Issues in the Olympic Park and how the Aquatic Centre might figure as a focal point in relation to healthy activity and this is seen as offering an



opportunity of co-operating with the local Primary Care Trust in terms of meeting the Governments targets on activity, combating obesity and improving health.

20 It would be true to say that the centre should be able to provide something of interest through a continuum from the very young to elderly people, who can either take part as an individual, or as a family or as a group, and also for persons with a disability or those suffering from illness for whom swimming is the only form of recreation or activity in which they can take part.

#### National Swimming Academy

21 The ASA has long held an aim of developing a National Swimming Academy possibly based upon a 50m pool and an academic Institution and linked into the Institute of Swimming. The ASA presently has some 12,000 candidates embarking on its qualifications as well as over 7,000 attending CPD events each year but the setting up of an Academy would be to provide a more comprehensive coach education and training programme in swimming and associated health issues as well as covering aspects of facility management and linking into the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence scheme, the emerging National Coaching Academy Network and the Sector Skills Academy.

22 The London Aquatic Centre would provide an ideal base and discussions have been held with the University of East London who are hoping to have a presence in the Olympic Park. The discussions have been fruitful and are continuing.

23 The development of the Academy is seen as a major step in the development of swimming and meeting its long term aims but of equal importance is the role it can play in the development of the London Aquatic Centre as part of the everyday life in the East End of London.

#### Impact of the Games on Grass Roots Participation

24 We believe that the award of the 2012 Olympic Games to London gives British sport, as a whole, a 'once-in-a-lifetime' opportunity to make a huge leap forward in performance. However, we also believe that it provides a catalyst for sport to contribute towards improving health, fighting obesity, improving the quality of life and helping combat some of the social ills of crime, drug abuse and equity.

25 It is difficult to be specific about the impact that the success in winning the Games for London has had on grass roots participation in swimming but what can be said is that the ASA is now involved with a number of different partners in initiatives which are aimed at getting more people swimming.



26 Initial interest in swimming often comes through school or because of family involvement and participation is often sustained throughout life. Unlike many sports the cost of equipment, a costume, towel and perhaps a pair of goggles, is small and for this reason alone swimming is well placed to make a significant impact on the Government's objective of promoting activity for all, through its "At least Five A Week" recommendation. Swimming is already the most popular sports activity with 11.9 million people swimming regularly and research has shown that 13% of the population who do not have an active lifestyle consider swimming would be their choice of recreation.

27 The challenge is to transfer this interest into activity but for swimming to make an impact in increasing participation there needs to be a culture change in the way swimming pools are operated to meet the diverse needs of both new and existing customers.

29 Indeed the ASA in the past has been involved with a number of partners in various parts of the country in schemes designed to encourage swimming and for people generally to be more active and to involve young people and in particular the most hard to reach and vulnerable.. Whilst these schemes have been successful the ASA is now involved with the Government's Free Swimming initiative and sees this as a major catalyst in turning the intention to swim into actual activity.

30 The ASA believes that the Legacy of the Olympic Aquatic Centre will be to drive participation in swimming and its associated activities in the East end of London.

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