



Dartington Recreation Association

# DARTINGTON

# SWIMMING POOL

# — 2024 —

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SAVEYOURPOOL Dartington



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# Executive Summary

## Wellbeing, Community, Sustainability

The vision for the future of Dartington Swimming Pool (DSP) within Meadowbrook Park is a vibrant social hub, open and welcoming to all. Since its inception in 1973 it has established itself as a key community asset for Dartington, Totnes and the surrounding area, opening every summer until its temporary closure in September 2022.

This proposal to extensively refurbish and develop the existing public outdoor pool and ancillary facilities represents an opportunity to provide a sustainable future at a time when funding and business models for public leisure spaces need to become more flexible, entrepreneurial, and sustainable.



# Ambitions

Dartington Recreation Association (DRA), registered charity number 1168817, secured a 99-year lease in 2016 on the 10-acre Meadowbrook Park in which DSP is located. DRA recognises that a priority for the future is to expand the offer to significantly increase the number of pool users and activities each year and build long-term sustainability. It needs to develop its current facilities to enable it to broaden its offer and improve access as well as provide social space that will draw users from both the immediate and surrounding areas.

# Facilities

The proposal relates to extensive refurbishment works to the existing public outdoor pool and ancillary facilities, and the implementation of a renewable heating strategy. The pool is currently closed due to its dilapidated state and is in desperate need of essential upgrades. The requirements arising out of a consultation process is for a new, 'fit for purpose' facility which can provide an up-to-date heated pool with improved and increased use of outdoor swimming, community recreation and leisure with an extended season. The refurbishment works present the opportunity for a pool extension to achieve a 25m pool length. The design allows for multiple uses such as lane swimming sessions, improved children's play and safety, improved accessibility (e.g. sloping steps in for baby and toddler sessions) and wheelchair user access.

A smart and sustainable pool is a pool fitted with equipment which is easy to use, reliable and durable, suitable for operating effectively, continuously, and autonomously, which is resource-efficient (in terms of energy, water and products) and has low environmental impact.

In addition to installing a sustainable pool, the project will transform a small existing pavilion to provide both facilities to support the sports activities and a space for commercial opportunities.

# Cost and Sustainability

Times have changed since the pool was first built when £3,000 covered the construction costs and much of the work could be undertaken by volunteers. An upgrade that extends the season, adds heating from renewable energy, increases access, and provides a sustainable business model is estimated to cost closer to a million pounds today.

A capital funding overview is included to illustrate the financial feasibility of this ambition. Approaches to statutory bodies will form the basis of the campaign capital alongside the potential of significant support across a range of funding streams from a combination of national and local trusts, the corporate sector, and individuals.

As one of the most urgent drivers for this proposal, the long-term financial sustainability of the upgraded facilities is equally important. Designated funds within the Dartington Recreation Association (DRA) offer the bedrock on which to build a sustainable model, enhanced by a broader range of income generating activities.

The business model for the expanded pool is based on prudent assumptions regarding visitor numbers and income streams, which have been supported by market, business, and fundraising research. The future of the pool will be built on a broad range of income sources that together will provide resilience and manage risk.

## The Team

This Prospectus into the proposed development of the Dartington Community Pool has been developed by a group of committed volunteers who have significant experience in capital development, strategic and financial planning, fundraising, marketing, operational delivery, and recreational and educational services.

The Design Access Statement was commissioned in December 2022 and updated in August 2024 by Andrew Kirby Architects.

# Conclusion

The need for modern and efficient recreational facilities has never been greater. Dartington Community Pool provides the opportunity to develop a model for sustainable community pools which can be shared and replicated in other locations, bringing the benefits to a much wider public.



# Existing Organisation and Activity

## Dartington Recreation Association

Meadowbrook Park where the pool is located comprises 10 acres in the heart of Dartington. The land is owned by The Dartington Hall Trust (registered charity number 279756 and company no 01485560) and leased to Dartington Recreation Association (Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered charity number 1168817) on a 99-year lease (96 years unexpired).

In 1963 the Dartington Recreation Association (DRA) was granted 10 acres of land on a long lease from Dartington Trust (DT) to provide sport, recreation, and educational opportunities for all. It provides and maintains facilities (football pitches, outdoor swimming pool, community centre, MUGA (Multi Use Games Area), bike track, playground and car park and encourages the creation and maintenance of local clubs to run activities and events.

The association thrived in the 1960s and 70s supporting a youth club, swimming club, tennis club, football club and much more alongside a calendar of community events. Over time the association struggled to maintain the facilities and to recruit volunteers.

In 2016 the association was relaunched as a registered charity (CIO) with an enthusiastic and forward-looking new committee, full of energy to revitalise the facilities and re-connect with local residents. It agreed a vision to “create a vibrant hub for sport, recreation, education and leisure for the residents of Dartington and surrounding areas, and to offer opportunities for all to improve their health and wellbeing”. Subsequent achievements, driven by trustees and a community of volunteers include a series of successful fundraising events and weekly engagement with the community and education establishments.



# History of Dartington Swimming Pool

As Ted Hicks explains in his booklet Dartington Swimming Club and Pool detailing the history of Dartington Swimming Pool, the first Dartington Swimming Pool was a static water tank installed in the village green during World War 2 to counter fires which was adopted by local young people looking to cool down and have some fun. Much later the pool at the local school and Foxhole School on Dartington Trust estate saw the birth of the Swimming Club. Combined with the DRA it was this group that were able to push forward, overcoming several obstacles; finding a site and funds to build the original swimming pool. In 1972 the pool kit arrived, a digger was borrowed, and a hole dug. As Ted intimates, the work was done by local villagers and volunteers under supervision “Doctors turned into navies, lorry drivers became plumbers and so on”. The pool was 20 metres long, 10 metres wide and 1.85 metres at the deepest end, and unheated. The entire project cost approximately £3000.

Over the years funds were raised and improvements made as generations of local people learnt to swim in the pool. Gradually health and safety improvements were introduced and the pool remained a thriving hub. The football Pavilion was built in the pool compound in 1998 after a fire in 1996 destroyed the original, located on the Dorothy Elmhirst Field nearby. In 2019 a newly formed committee took over the management of the pool and demonstrated the capability to run the facilities effectively; even under COVID the pool was close to capacity. The pool operating and emergency procedures were gradually brought up to modern standards and in 2020 a group was formed to begin the process of understanding how to safeguard the future of the pool. Despite the cold water and slightly run down feel it was still well loved and much used especially by families primarily after school and at weekends.

In the summer of 2022 the pool liner finally gave way in several places and although it limped through to the end of the season it was to be the last.

“To have such amazing facilities on our doorstep would be absolutely fantastic for our pupils and young adults. Bidwell Brook Special School”

“Planned improvements including renewable heating and improved accessibility will support the offer of school swimming curriculum which has had to be postponed.”

Charlotte Huish Head Teacher DPS

“Keeping the pool going for future generations is vital. It is a gift we must continue to give to this community.”

# Recent activities in Meadowbrook Park

In 2019 with funding raised from Pocket Parks upgrades were made to the run-down playground, replacing the defunct hazardous paddling pool with a new boules court, rusty swings with new inclusive swing sets, and the addition of a table tennis table. In 2020/21 with funding raised by volunteers from The Community Fund and Postcode Local Trust a larger inclusive rustic adventure playground was installed. In 2022 a two loop inclusive woodland bike track was created funded by a grant from British Cycling Places to Ride programme. Also in 2022 the DRA reopened Meadowbrook Community Building welcoming two local businesses (New Lion Brewery now Things Happen Here, and Pizzalogica) to the site to provide hospitality services, making upstairs rooms available for groups to hire. By running the community centre with commercial partners a financially sustainable model has been established. More recently further improvements have been made to the multi-use games area (MUGA) adding football goals to enable year round informal recreational play by schools and the public.



# The Need for Action

## The National Need

In 2017 Swim England commissioned major new research into the health benefits of swimming. The Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Swimming report highlights the enormous potential swimming and aquatic activity has to support the health of the population due to its popularity and accessibility across the lifetime. It is the perfect way for people of all ages to exercise, particularly those with injuries, impairments, long term health conditions, or those who struggle to exercise on land.

The report found evidence that swimmers live longer, that regular swimming helps older people stay mentally and physically fit, and participation in swimming lessons can help children to develop physical, cognitive and social skills quicker. Furthermore there is increasing evidence that swimming is a cost-effective activity that will help the National Health Service to save money.

In 2021 Swim England produced a report A Decade of Decline: The Future of Swimming Pools in England which recognises the loss and potential future loss of much needed swimming facilities, many of which are now coming to the end of their lifespan. Nationally they predict 3.86 million people will have lost access to an activity they love. In the Southwest they predict the closure of 61 pools by 2030.

In 2023 the government, recognising the value of investing in swimming facilities, launched a Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) to provide £60 million to local authorities in England as a support package for public leisure facilities with swimming pools.

## The Local Need

### Residents and Visitors

From 2011 to 2021 the population of the South-West has grown by 7.8 %, the South Hams population size has increased by 6.6%, from around 83,100 in 2011 to 88,600 in 2021. Broadly speaking the population is in line with national trends, although there are slightly more 10–30-year-olds. Meadowbrook Park is set in the beautiful Devon village of Dartington which is expanding rapidly, particularly with an influx of young families, in part due to new housing development in the area over the last ten years.

The DRA remains the main provider of play and recreation activities. However, our community covers a much wider area including deprived areas of Newton Abbott, Paignton, and Totnes. Moor towns are connected by bus and Paignton and Newton Abbot are connected by bus and train. A survey of users in 2022 shows our core users are from Totnes, Dartington and the surrounding two miles (78% of users) but also 22% of users came from the wider ten-mile area.

In the main, people enjoy being active – playing sport or simply playing, but equally importantly it is a place where people connect – where parents meet while their children play. We are nurturing a healthy, connected community.

The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (2019) recognises that Dartington Estate (site owners) provides significant opportunities for informal recreation, enjoyed by local residents and visitors alike. The 2017 Dartington Open Spaces and Sports Recreation Plan (OSSR) recognises Meadowbrook as a future hub for play, sport and recreation in the village and outlines the swimming pool as a priority for development of sports facilities.

## Educational establishments

Immediately adjacent to the park there are five educational establishments – Dartington C of E Academy, The Wave (River Dart Academy), The Brook Respite and Life skills center, Lifeworks College, and Bidwell Brook Special School – all of whom use the Meadowbrook Park and facilities. Six additional schools are located within a three mile radius.

At Bidwell Brook, a school for over 100 pupils across a wide geographical area with moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) or complex needs, 51% of pupils are eligible for disadvantaged funding.

The Wave is an alternative provision academy with 25 pupils, 48% of whom are eligible for school meals.

Lifeworks is a post 16 college for up to 40 young people with learning disabilities.

30% of pupils from Dartington C of E Academy have Special Education Needs (SEN), which is 3 times the national average. The catchment for the school includes Totnes and surrounding villages, and includes 259 pupils. Across the school there are 49 students who access pupil premium.

School pupils using Meadowbrook Park in the day come from a wide geographical area. Bidwell Brook has 12 students from areas with a Multiple Deprivation Decile of 3 or lower and the 21 children living in homes experiencing deprivation relating to income; 11 of whom are amongst the most deprived 30% of the country and 10 who are in the most deprived 20% (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index [IDACI] decile).

# Vision for the Future – Wellbeing, Community, Sustainability

The vision for the future of Dartington Swimming Pool (DSP) within Meadowbrook Park is a vibrant social hub, open and inviting for all. This proposal to extensively refurbish and develop the existing public outdoor pool and ancillary facilities represents an opportunity to provide a sustainable future at a time when funding and business models for public leisure spaces need to become more flexible, entrepreneurial, and sustainable.

The pool will be temporarily closed until 2026 to secure planning permission and funding followed by a significant upgrade to futureproof the facilities and provide an outstanding service for local users and visitors. The project will be undertaken in two phases. Phase one will include the major upgrade to the swimming pool and small improvements to the Pavilions' changing areas to make them usable. Phase two sees a significant upgrade to the Pavilions' changing facilities to include an independent cafe with a poolside patio and covered outside space, access to poolside from changing area, changing cubicle, family changing cubicles, accessible toilet, and shower space.

The Design Access Statement (DAS) produced by Andrew Kirby Associates in collaboration with the Pool Refurbishment Team, illustrates the ambition of the project.

Phase 1 will develop a new, 'fit for purpose' facility, providing an up to date, heated pool with improved and increased use of outdoor swimming, community recreation and leisure, and enabling the season to be extended. The current pool design will be diversified to meet the needs of the pool's users. The design allows for multiple uses such as lane swimming sessions, improved children's play and safety, improved accessibility. Providing renewable heating to the pool is central to the proposed works.

Key design features include:

- Sustainability - heating
- Extension of pool to 25m
- Improved accessibility
- Café
- Modernised changing facilities
- Improved landscape amenity including a new Devon Bank with mixed native hedge species planting.

Phase 2 will commence once the main pool upgrade has been undertaken and all funds have been secured to complete the project.

# Costs and Capital Funding Strategy

The estimated capital project costs for the pool refurbishment have been based on three quotes which were obtained in 2020 and subsequently revised upwards based on industry increases in labour and materials. All other costs have been estimated whilst quotes are obtained for the full scope of works.

A fundraising plan has begun to identify potential sources of funding. We will launch a fundraising campaign to raise £1m. Fundraising efforts to date have raised c.£26K from s106, DRA core funds and community fundraising events, primarily to fund the submission of a full planning application. A further c.£ 89k has been pledged from s106. We are currently developing our strategic fundraising plan charting out campaign dates and strategies, donor-tracking and retention plans, special event details, and a targeted communication schedule. We are also beginning to nurture and develop relationships with potential key donors.

Initial scoping suggests the following framework for the fundraising plan:

Statutory Funding e.g. National Lottery, Sport England, Government grants	300,000
Trusts and Foundations	250,000
Corporate Support e.g. sponsorship, naming rights	150,000
Individuals e.g. patron scheme	80,000
Crowdfunding	90,000
Community Events	60,000
Donations-in-kind, Gift Aid	70,000
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	1,000,000

It is acknowledged that this is an ambitious target. The scope of works will be continuously monitored and revised to reflect the funds secured.

