

AGM 10th June 2026

Kyle Hall 7.30pm

Chairs Report

Welcome everyone to our AGM. I'm Fiona Begg and I chair Lochalsh and Skye Swimming Pool Association (LSSPA) which is the organisation responsible for overseeing the management of Lochalsh Leisure Centre here in Kyle.

We are a Charity owned and managed by the Community-the people of Lochalsh and South Skye and our purpose is to promote and operate leisure and recreational activities to improve health and wellbeing and teach children and adults to swim.

The Charity was set up in 1990 following a spate of drownings in the local area. Too many children and adults had little or no experience of saving themselves in the sea and could not swim.

The pool opened in 1992 and apart from during Covid and following the fire in January 2024 our staff have been teaching children from Lochalsh and South Skye, and adults too, to swim and gain confidence in the water ever since. That is a milestone our community should be very proud of!!

In recent times we hear all too often of people-young and old getting into difficulty in rivers and beaches due to their lack of ability and knowledge to swim to safety. Perhaps it is time to campaign for Scotland to align with England and make learning to swim for all children a statutory obligation?

The Charity currently has 5 trustees-4 who were appointed in April 2024 following the fire and a fifth who joined in June 2025 at our last AGM.

During the year April 2024-March 2025 our challenges continued for a further 9 months up until the end of 2024 when we finally believed we had turned a corner and could see a future for the Association and a phased reopening of the Leisure Centre.

The Kyleakin to Kyle swim in September 2024 was a pivotal event. We had a full list of swimmers who worked very hard raising funds through JustGiving. The event kick started the most incredible amount of community fundraising from coffee mornings to lunch events to school children having sales and events in their schools. Over £100k was raised in 4 months. Friends of Lochalsh Leisure Centre was formed and we are grateful for their support and fundraising contribution.

It was the most incredible show of support and community commitment since the pool fundraised to build the Centre back in the 1990s. We cannot thank the people of our community enough and it gave us the confidence to move forward.

Our first task was to advertise for a new manager which we did in October 2024. Our Chair at the time- Paul- announced that he was going to apply for the job. He stood down from the board, and we interviewed him along with a couple of others. Paul started in late November 2024 with one member of staff who had been kept on through the year. Another member of staff was on maternity leave and helped out when she could.

Together they cleared out, refurbished and painted the Centre. They worked tirelessly in the background, and I'd like to thank them on behalf of the Association and Community for their effort.

With funding from the Highland Council's Community Regeneration Fund, we upgraded the plumbing and electrics to make everything compliant. Our insurers paid for the fire damaged work, but this cost was far smaller than we'd been led to believe it would be.

CRF funds paid for all our policies, procedures and contracts to be reviewed and updated. The board is reviewing our governing documents on an ongoing basis and setting targets for future plans.

In January 2025 the gym reopened. A large recruitment drive followed to find new staff who would then need to be trained up as lifeguards, first aiders and finally swimming teachers. Without trained staff on site the pool had to remain closed. The pool reopened in May 2025 for general use. A reduced service of swimming lessons started soon after and by the end of 2025 all staff were fully trained swimming teachers.

All the time we were seeking advice from professional consultants to clarify the Charity's route out of the enormous challenge we had inherited.

We reopened dialogue with the Highland Council and Highlife Highland and re-established a partnership. Since the opening of the Centre in 1992 Highland Council has contributed funding, initially as a top up grant, but in 2011 this became a Service Level Agreement with a contract on the services to be delivered.

The contract and level of payment have remained the same for many years and not kept pace with inflation. If the Centre was to continue to offer the wide range of services including swim teaching to school groups and after school swimming lessons, then a greater level of support was necessary from the Council. HLH membership income could not sustain the service delivery.

In March 2025 we met with our Counsellors to ask for the funding to be increased. Although all the right noises were made nothing changed. We talked to our MSP Kate Forbes who tried to initiate a joint meeting. We have had very limited success in having any dialogue with the Council. We will not give up as there are many opportunities for working in partnership.

So, to conclude we still have many challenges ahead-not least that the building and equipment is old and inefficient, but on a positive note we are now working on this with a design team looking at options for upgrading and replacing plant and equipment as well as offering a greater service. We will be sharing with you where we've got to fairly soon.

And finally, I'd like to thank the trustees who have spent many hours at meetings writing minutes and applying for funding. And to all the staff team for their dedication and commitment they've given over the last 12-18 months. Together they have created a welcoming hub for people to come and take part in leisure and health improving activities. We are a stronger, healthier and more resilient community because of the LLC.

Fiona Begg

Chair