The Glover Street Opportunity: A Case for the Refurbishment and Enhancement of Perth Leisure Pool

Executive Summary

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of the future of leisure swimming provision in Perth, arguing that the refurbishment and enhancement of the existing Perth Leisure Pool at Glover Street is demonstrably superior to the current Perth and Kinross Council proposal to construct a new, smaller facility (PH2O) at the Thimblerow car park. The analysis evaluates the two options against key economic, community, and environmental metrics, concluding that the path of refurbishment offers superior long-term value, preserves a vital community asset, and presents a unique opportunity for environmental leadership.

The core findings of this report are threefold. Firstly, the economic case for the new-build facility is predicated on a narrow and misleading focus on initial capital expenditure. A robust Whole-Life Cost Analysis reveals that refurbishment is not only likely to be significantly cheaper over a 50-year horizon but also avoids the substantial "hidden" costs of demolition and the loss of a proven, revenue-generating regional attraction. The Council's current approach risks committing taxpayers to a financially imprudent long-term liability for a facility of diminished ambition.

Secondly, the proposed PH2O facility at Thimblerow represents a significant and irreversible downgrade in community and sporting provision. It would replace a unique, family-focused leisure destination with a generic competition pool, creating user conflict and failing to meet the needs of diverse groups, from young families to elite athletes. This "dilution of what we already have" [1] threatens the viability of key sporting clubs, diminishes Perth's appeal as a visitor destination, and dismantles a successful, co-located leisure hub.

Thirdly, the refurbishment of the Glover Street site offers a powerful environmental dividend that the new-build option cannot replicate. It avoids the immense "embodied carbon" emissions associated with demolition and new construction—a critical factor in meeting near-term climate targets. More significantly, the co-location of the pool with the Perth Ice Rink (Dewars Centre) presents a unique and technically feasible opportunity to create an integrated energy system. By capturing waste heat from the ice plant to heat the swimming pool, a refurbished facility could dramatically reduce operational costs and carbon emissions, creating a landmark example of sustainable public infrastructure.

Based on this evidence, the report concludes with a series of recommendations for Perth and Kinross Council. It urges an immediate pause on the Thimblerow project, the commissioning of a new, independent feasibility study based on a comprehensive whole-life costing and carbon assessment of both options, and a renewed, genuine consultation with the community to forge a consensus for a future that is both ambitious and sustainable.

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1. Perth Leisure Pool: An Enduring and Undervalued Civic Asset

To accurately assess the future of leisure provision in Perth, it is imperative to first establish a clear and evidence-based understanding of the existing Perth Leisure Pool. The prevailing narrative driving the proposal for its demolition frames the facility as an aging liability. However, a deeper analysis reveals it to be a strategic civic asset whose immense value has been obscured by a fundamental misdiagnosis of its condition, confusing the need for systemic renewal with a requirement for total replacement.

1.1 The Pool's Unique Position as a Regional Leisure Destination

Since its inauguration in 1988, Perth Leisure Pool has established itself as far more than a municipal swimming bath; it is one of Scotland's most popular and iconic visitor attractions.[2] Its enduring appeal stems from a unique and comprehensive "leisure water"

offering that sets it apart from standard swimming facilities. Features such as the half-moon and full-moon flumes, the wild water channel, bubble beds, and the "Monkey Jungle" interactive area create a family-centric destination experience.[2] This is a critical distinction, as it is this leisure-focused model that has consistently drawn visitors from across Scotland, underpinning its estimated 400,000 annual visits prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.[3]

The facility's strategic value is amplified by its location. Situated on Glover Street, it is a mere five-minute walk from Perth's city centre, train station, and bus depot, ensuring high accessibility for both local residents and visitors arriving via public transport.[2] Crucially, it shares a plentiful car park with the adjacent Dewars Centre, creating a cohesive and convenient leisure hub that can accommodate the high visitor numbers associated with a regional attraction.[2] This combination of a unique leisure offer and excellent accessibility is the foundation of its success and a strategic advantage that should not be lightly discarded.

1.2 Assessing the True Condition: Differentiating Building Fabric from Systemic Underinvestment

The justification for demolishing the Leisure Pool is frequently linked to its age, high running costs, and instances of unplanned closure. While these operational challenges are real, they have been incorrectly attributed to a failing building fabric. Evidence from community stakeholders with construction industry expertise suggests the building is "structurally sound" and possesses "years of life left in them".[1] The core issue is not the integrity of the building itself, but rather a prolonged "lack of capital investment in operating systems".[1]

The facility's operational difficulties, such as temporary pool closures for water quality management or equipment failure, are symptomatic of aging plant and mechanical systems—components that are designed to be serviced, upgraded, and periodically replaced over a building's lifespan.[1] Indeed, Perth and Kinross Council has already undertaken significant investment in these very systems, including a £2 million expenditure on plant improvements following a flood in 2020 [6] and a complex, 12-month reinstatement project in 2020-2021.[7] These actions, while reactive, demonstrate that the building is not beyond repair; on the contrary, it is capable of accommodating modern, efficient systems.

The Council's argument for demolition is therefore based on a critical analytical failure. It conflates the need for *system renewal* with the need for *building replacement*. The high energy costs, which contributed to an operating subsidy of £769,927 in 2022/23 [6], and the periodic shutdowns are symptoms of inefficient and outdated machinery, not a terminal structural decline. The logical and most cost-effective principle of asset management is to address the root cause of the problem—the underperforming systems—rather than resorting to the unnecessarily drastic and expensive measure of demolishing a structurally viable building. This misdiagnosis is the foundational error upon which the entire case for the Thimblerow new-build rests.

1.3 The Social Fabric: A Hub for Families, Community Groups, and Athletes

The Leisure Pool's value extends deep into the social fabric of Perth and Kinross. It is the single most-used leisure facility in the region, with swimming being the most popular activity by a significant margin. In the 2022/23 period alone, it hosted 314,246 swimming sessions and 80,297 swimming lessons, dwarfing gym usage, the next highest activity.[4] Community campaigns and petitions reflect this deep connection, describing the facility as "a hub of joy, learning, and family bonding" where lifelong memories are created.[4] Special offers and family-friendly pricing further embed its role as an accessible and cherished community space.[8]

Beyond its role in family recreation, the pool is a critical piece of infrastructure for organised sport. It is the home venue for Perth City Swim Club, an organisation with a distinguished history of producing athletes who have achieved success at Commonwealth, Olympic, European, and World Championship levels.[4] The current facility, with its dedicated training pool alongside the main leisure water, provides the necessary space for the club to conduct its training programmes and, crucially, to host competitions. These events not only support the club's finances but also bring prestige and economic activity to the city.[4] The loss of this facility, as proposed, would not just be the loss of a building, but a severe blow to the sporting ecosystem of the entire region.

2. An Unsuitable Successor: A Critical Analysis of the PH2O Thimblerow Proposal

The proposal by Perth and Kinross Council to demolish the Leisure Pool and construct a new £74 million PH2O facility at the Thimblerow car park is presented as a forward-looking, sustainable investment.[10] However, a critical examination of the plans reveals a project that represents a significant reduction in ambition, fails to meet the diverse needs of the community, threatens the viability of local sports clubs, and introduces a host of practical and logistical challenges. It is not a like-for-like replacement but a fundamental downgrading of Perth's leisure offer.

2.1 A Reduction in Ambition: The Community Cost of a Generic Facility

The proposed PH2O facility is a shadow of both the existing Leisure Pool and the original, more ambitious vision for a combined leisure complex at Glover Street, which was previously costed at £85-£90 million.[6] The central flaw in the Thimblerow plan is the replacement of a large, dedicated leisure pool with a standard 8-lane, 25-metre training pool. Within this single body of water, all activities—lane swimming, lessons, club training, and family leisure—must be timetabled and segregated.[13] This model has been described by community sports representatives as "civic vandalism" and "a dilution of what we already have".[1]

While subsequent revisions to the plan have incorporated "flumes and enhanced leisure water features" in response to public pressure, the specified components—such as 5.5-metre flumes and an extended splashpad—are minor additions that do not replicate the scale, variety, or immersive experience of the current facility's flumes, wild water channel, and outdoor lagoon.[2] This configuration will inevitably lead to significant user conflict. Leisure users seeking a fun, family experience will be competing for limited space and time with swimming clubs requiring dedicated lanes for training and lessons, a situation that will "satisfy no one".[14] The proposal fundamentally misunderstands the primary appeal of the existing pool, sacrificing its unique leisure identity for a generic, multi-purpose model that is inadequate for all its intended users.

2.2 The Impact on Perth's Sporting Ecosystem: A Threat to Club Viability

For Perth City Swim Club, the proposed facility would have "disastrous consequences".[4] The constrained space and timetabling pressures would reduce available training hours, which are already less than those at other major Scottish clubs, and severely compromise the club's ability to maintain its record of national and international success.[4] Furthermore, the inability to host major competitions would cut off a vital source of revenue and prestige for both the club and the city.[4]

The plan also fractures the successful co-location of swimming and ice sports. The proposal to sever the Dewars Centre from council management and offer it to curling bodies to run independently, even with a nominal rent, has been met with grave concern.[15] Representatives from the curling community view the prospect of taking on a large, aging building with "a lot of burdens attached to it" as a potentially unviable proposition that could sound the "death knell for curling in Perth".[14] This move effectively dismantles a proven multi-sport hub without a clear, sustainable plan for one of its key components.

2.3 Location and Logistics: Evaluating the Practical Deficiencies of the Thimblerow Site

The choice of the Thimblerow car park as the site for the new facility introduces significant practical deficiencies. Community leaders and former leisure employees have labelled the location "inadequate and short-sighted," citing a critical lack of parking and insufficient space for the proposed dry-sport activities.[1] The concern over parking is so pronounced that the council's chief executive has publicly acknowledged the need to monitor the situation, an implicit admission of the plan's weakness.[15] A regional-draw facility requires ample, convenient parking, a requirement the constrained city-centre Thimblerow site cannot meet.

Furthermore, the council's broader strategy creates a cascade of land-use conflicts. The decision to free up the prime Glover Street site has led to it being earmarked for both affordable housing and a new, relocated facility for the charity Capability Scotland.[10]

However, Capability Scotland has publicly stated that the allocated portion of the site is not large enough for their needs, raising serious questions about the viability of that aspect of the plan.[1]

This collection of decisions reveals a flawed strategic direction. The council is abandoning a proven and successful 'destination leisure hub' model—where multiple, high-quality facilities are co-located with dedicated infrastructure like parking and transport links—in favour of a dispersed and less coherent 'city centre service' model. The current Glover Street site functions as a self-contained, multi-purpose destination that combines a regional-draw swimming pool with a national-level ice rink.[2] The new plan shatters this synergy. It moves a diminished pool to a logistically challenging city-centre site, places the future of the ice rink in jeopardy, and repurposes the original, superior site for other uses. This prioritises a vague and unsubstantiated goal of "city centre vibrancy" [15] over the tangible, proven success of a dedicated and highly accessible leisure complex, representing a significant strategic error.

3. The Economic Imperative: A Whole-Life Cost Analysis of Refurbishment vs. New Build

The financial justification for the PH2O Thimblerow project rests on the assertion that it is the most "affordable" and "cost-effective solution".[12] This conclusion, however, is derived from a narrow analysis that prioritises initial capital outlay over the total, long-term cost of ownership. A comprehensive economic assessment, utilising the industry-standard framework of Life Cycle Cost Analysis (LCCA), demonstrates that refurbishing the existing Perth Leisure Pool is not only a viable alternative but is likely the more financially prudent option for the taxpayers of Perth and Kinross over the long term.

3.1 Beyond the Headline Figure: Introducing a Life Cycle Costing Framework

Life Cycle Cost Analysis is a method for assessing the total cost of facility ownership, accounting for all costs associated with acquiring, owning, operating, maintaining, and ultimately disposing of a building or building system.[17] Its purpose is to select the option that provides the lowest overall cost of ownership consistent with quality and function. This approach is critical because, over a typical 30-year period, initial construction costs can account for as little as 2% of the total cost, whereas operations and maintenance can constitute 6% and personnel costs 92%.[17]

The Council's focus on the headline capital cost of the new build—currently estimated at £74 million for the Thimblerow option, a figure that has already risen by £5 million due to inflation [1]—is therefore a misleading metric for determining "best value".[10] It ignores the substantial future costs of financing, operations, and maintenance, while simultaneously failing to account for the "avoided costs" and unique revenue advantages associated with the refurbishment option. A decision of this magnitude must be based on a holistic financial view, not a single, upfront number.

3.2 Comparative Financial Modelling: The 50-Year Cost of Ownership

To illustrate the stark difference between the two approaches, this report presents a comparative financial model based on available data and established industry principles. While a definitive analysis requires a full, independent feasibility study, this projection provides a more accurate framework for understanding the true financial implications.

New Build (PH2O at Thimblerow): The total cost of this option extends far beyond the £74 million capital price tag. It must include the substantial loan charges required to finance the construction over a 40-year period (as modelled for similar council projects [18]), the ongoing operational subsidy that a new facility will still inevitably require, and the significant, unbudgeted cost of demolishing the existing Perth Leisure Pool. Furthermore, it must account for the opportunity cost of lost revenue resulting from replacing a unique regional attraction with a smaller, generic facility that is projected to have a lower visitor capacity.

Refurbishment (Glover Street): This option presents a fundamentally different financial profile. The initial capital cost for a comprehensive refurbishment is significantly lower than for a new build. Authoritative studies have shown that over a 50-year life cycle, it can be more than twice as expensive to build new than to carry out extensive renovations.[19] This lower upfront cost translates into reduced long-term financing charges. Most critically, a refurbishment at Glover Street allows for the implementation of an integrated

heat-exchange system with the Dewars Centre, which would dramatically reduce energy consumption and, therefore, the long-term operational subsidy required from the council. This unique synergy, detailed further in Section 4, represents a substantial and permanent financial advantage that is physically impossible to achieve with the Thimblerow proposal.

The following table provides a high-level comparison of the projected whole-life costs for each option, demonstrating the superior long-term financial viability of refurbishment.

Financial Metric	PH2O New Build at Thimblerow	Refurbishment & Enhancement at Glover Street	Rationale & Supporting Evidence
Initial Capital Outlay	High (£74M+, rising with inflation)	Moderate (Significantly less than new build)	New build cost confirmed at £74M.[10] Refurbishment is consistently shown to be cheaper than new build.[19] Includes demolition costs for new build.
Total Financing Costs	High (Based on £74M+ principal)	Moderate (Based on lower principal)	Loan charges are a direct function of the capital cost. A lower initial investment reduces the long-term burden on council finances.[18]
Projected 50-Year Energy Costs	High (Standard modern efficiency)	Low (Exceptional efficiency via heat exchange)	Refurbishment at Glover Street allows for waste heat recovery from the ice rink, drastically cutting pool heating costs—an advantage unavailable at Thimblerow.[15]
Projected 50-Year Maintenance Costs	Moderate (New systems, but standard lifecycle)	Low-Moderate (New systems integrated into existing structure)	Both options would have new plant and equipment, but refurbishment avoids the long-term risks associated with an entirely new and complex building on a constrained site.
Projected 50-Year Operational Subsidy	High	Low	The significant energy savings from the heat exchange system directly reduce the annual subsidy required from the council, creating a more sustainable operational model.[21]
Estimated Total Cost of Ownership (50-Year)	**Very High**	**Significantly Lower**	The combination of lower capital costs, reduced financing, and substantial, permanent energy savings makes refurbishment the most financially prudent long-term option.

Table 1: Comparative Whole-Life Cost Projection (50-Year Horizon): Refurbishment vs. New Build.

4. The Environmental Dividend: Embodied Carbon and a Unique Energy Synergy

Beyond the compelling economic and community arguments, the case for refurbishing Perth Leisure Pool is powerfully reinforced by two distinct environmental advantages. Firstly, reusing the existing structure avoids the significant and irreversible carbon emissions associated with demolition and new construction. Secondly, the unique co-location of the pool and the Dewars Centre ice rink at Glover Street offers a rare opportunity to create a highly efficient, closed-loop energy system, positioning Perth as a leader in sustainable public infrastructure.

4.1 The Carbon Cost of Demolition: Quantifying the Avoided Emissions of Refurbishment

Any credible assessment of a major construction project must now account for "embodied carbon"—the greenhouse gas emissions generated during the extraction, manufacture, transportation, and installation of building materials.[22] These emissions are released "upfront" and represent a significant, immediate impact on the climate. The decision to demolish a large, structurally sound building like Perth Leisure Pool and replace it with a new one would trigger a massive release of embodied carbon.

Groundbreaking research in this field concludes that building reuse almost always yields fewer environmental impacts than new construction.[23] Crucially, it can take between 10 and 80 years for a new, energy-efficient building to save enough operational carbon to offset the initial carbon debt incurred during its construction.[23] This means that even if the new PH2O facility were built to the highest energy-efficiency standards, such as Passivhaus [3], its net contribution to climate change would be negative for decades to come. In an era where immediate and drastic carbon reductions are required to meet climate targets, choosing demolition over refurbishment is

an environmentally indefensible strategy. By retaining and retrofitting the existing building, the council can avoid this substantial carbon outlay entirely, making refurbishment the only option aligned with a genuine commitment to climate action.[22]

4.2 The Glover Street Synergy: A Technical Deep-Dive into Pool and Ice Rink Heat Exchange

The most compelling technical and environmental argument for the Glover Street site lies in a unique energy synergy that has been consistently raised by community members and technical experts but largely ignored in the council's official considerations.[14] The co-location of a swimming pool and an ice rink presents a perfect opportunity for waste heat recovery.

Principles of Waste Heat Recovery: An ice rink's refrigeration system functions as a large-scale heat pump. It extracts thermal energy from the ice sheet and the building to maintain freezing temperatures and must then reject this captured heat into the atmosphere, typically via external condensers or cooling towers. This rejected energy is effectively "waste heat." Simultaneously, a swimming pool requires a vast and continuous input of thermal energy to maintain its water temperature. A heat exchange system can create a closed loop between these two facilities. The waste heat captured from the ice plant, instead of being vented to the atmosphere, can be transferred via a heat exchanger to heat the swimming pool water.[20] This is a proven, reliable, and highly efficient technology.

Technical Feasibility at Glover Street: The conditions at the Glover Street site are ideal for such a project. The Dewars Centre has already undergone a major upgrade to its refrigeration plant, with the installation of a modern, efficient, low-charge ammonia chiller system.[25] This modern plant provides a perfect foundation for a heat recovery retrofit. Technical literature confirms that retrofitting existing plants for this purpose is a common and straightforward process, and that swimming pools are considered an ideal "dump for all the waste heat" generated by an ice rink, as their large thermal mass can absorb the energy consistently.[20] The capital cost of incorporating the necessary heat exchangers and control systems is modest in the context of a multi-million-pound project, with some core components costing in the range of $20,000 to $30,000.[20]

Projected Savings: The implementation of this system would lead to a dramatic reduction in the operational costs and carbon footprint of both facilities. The business case for the original, larger PH2O project at Glover Street already projected annual utility savings of £420,000.[21] An integrated heat exchange system would be a primary driver of such savings, if not exceeding them, by virtually eliminating the need for separate, fossil-fuel-based heating for the pool water. This translates directly into a lower annual operating subsidy from the council and a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. This unique, site-specific opportunity is a defining advantage of the Glover Street location—an advantage that is physically lost forever if the pool is relocated to Thimblerow.

Operational Metric	Estimated Annual Impact of Integrated Heat Exchange	Rationale & Supporting Evidence
Waste Heat Captured from Ice Plant	Significant (quantifiable in kWh/year)	Ice refrigeration plants constantly reject heat, which is a capturable energy source. Modern ammonia chillers are efficient at this process.[25]
Reduced Gas/Electricity for Pool Heating	>90% reduction	The captured waste heat would become the primary source for pool water heating, drastically reducing reliance on traditional boilers.[20]
Projected Annual Financial Savings	£200,000 - £400,000+	Directly reduces utility bills. The original PH2O business case estimated £420,000 in annual utility savings for a combined facility.[21]
Projected Annual CO2e Reduction	Significant (quantifiable in tonnes/year)	Directly corresponds to the reduction in fossil fuel consumption for heating, contributing substantially to the Council's climate goals.[22]

Table 2: Estimated Annual Savings from Integrated Heat Exchange System.

5. Fostering Community Capital: The Social and Wider Economic Returns of a Premier Facility

The decision between refurbishment and a new build cannot be made on capital cost and technical specifications alone. High-quality public leisure facilities are crucial pieces of social infrastructure that generate significant, albeit sometimes indirect, economic and

social returns. Retaining a premier, regional-scale facility like Perth Leisure Pool represents an investment in public health, the local tourism economy, and the overall attractiveness of Perth and Kinross as a place to live, work, and invest.

5.1 Public Health and Wellbeing as an Economic Driver

There is a well-established link between access to quality recreational facilities and positive public health outcomes. Regular physical activity is proven to reduce the risk of numerous chronic conditions, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and certain cancers, while also improving mental wellbeing by reducing stress and anxiety.[27] By providing an accessible and appealing venue for exercise, Perth Leisure Pool contributes to a healthier population, which in turn leads to tangible economic benefits through reduced healthcare costs for the community.[29]

Furthermore, the social nature of the facility amplifies these benefits. Studies have shown that participation in group or community-based activities, such as those offered at a family-focused leisure centre, can be superior to individual exercise in achieving wellbeing benefits.[28] The Leisure Pool acts as a hub for social connection, fostering community cohesion, a sense of belonging, and social capital—all essential components of a thriving community.[27]

5.2 Preserving a Key Tourism and Visitor Asset for Perth

As established, Perth Leisure Pool is not just a local amenity but a proven visitor attraction that draws people from across Scotland.[2] This role as a tourist destination is a direct economic benefit to Perth. Visitors who travel to use the pool are likely to spend money in local cafes, restaurants, shops, and potentially on accommodation, contributing to the wider visitor economy.[29] Demolishing this unique attraction in favour of a standard community pool, which can be found in many other towns, would diminish Perth's tourism offer, particularly for the lucrative family market.

Moreover, retaining a facility capable of hosting major swimming galas and competitions is an economic asset. Such events bring an influx of athletes, officials, and spectators to the city, generating significant revenue for the local hospitality sector.[29] The proposed Thimblerow facility, with its constrained space and potential conflicts between user groups, would be far less capable of hosting such events, representing a direct loss of economic opportunity.[4]

5.3 Attracting and Retaining Residents: The Role of Quality-of-Life Infrastructure

In the modern economy, the competition between cities and regions is increasingly fought on the basis of quality of life. The ability to attract and retain skilled "knowledge workers" and affluent retirees, who are crucial drivers of economic growth, depends heavily on the provision of high-quality amenities and recreational opportunities.[29] Research has shown that factors like scenic beauty and access to recreation are top priorities for people choosing a new location to live.[29]

A premier leisure facility like the one that could be created through a comprehensive refurbishment of the Glover Street site is a powerful signal of a community's commitment to a high quality of life. It makes the region more attractive to potential homebuyers and businesses looking to relocate. A 2001 survey by the National Association of Realtors found that 57% of potential homebuyers would choose a home close to parks and open space, with 50% willing to pay a 10% premium for it.[29] Investing in and modernising a landmark community asset is a direct investment in the long-term prosperity and appeal of Perth and Kinross.

6. A Blueprint for Renewal: Learning from Best Practice in Leisure Centre Refurbishment

The narrative that a new build is the only path to a modern, efficient, and high-quality facility is a false dichotomy. Across the UK, local authorities are increasingly recognising the immense value of refurbishment as a viable, successful, and sustainable strategy for upgrading their leisure stock. These projects serve as a blueprint, demonstrating that a renewed Perth Leisure Pool can meet and exceed the standards of a new facility at a lower economic and environmental cost.

Case Studies in Successful Modernisation

Numerous case studies provide a clear precedent for the successful refurbishment of aging leisure centres, demonstrating that even complex challenges can be overcome to deliver outstanding results.

Camberwell Leisure Centre, London: This project involved a £4.7 million investment by Southwark Council to save a rundown, Grade II listed Victorian building. The ambitious project converted a single 38-metre pool, built in 1891, into two modern pools (a 25-metre main pool and a learner pool). This complex structural reconfiguration was achieved while preserving the historic integrity of the original tank and installing entirely new plant, filtration, and chemical control systems to meet modern standards. The project, driven by a community campaign, proves that even historically significant and structurally complex buildings can be successfully adapted for modern use.[30]

Stour Leisure Centre, Ashford: Faced with aging infrastructure and high energy costs, Ashford Borough Council used a £1.7 million Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant to completely overhaul the energy systems of its 1972-built leisure centre. The project replaced failing gas boilers with a new air-source heat pump system, installed 598 solar panels on the roof, and upgraded lighting and pool pumps. The result was a remarkable 71% reduction in carbon emissions and a secure energy future for the facility. This case provides a direct and powerful UK precedent for a large-scale energy retrofit of a municipal leisure centre, mirroring the opportunity available at Glover Street.[31]

Fairfield Leisure Centre, Dartford: After more than 40 years of service, this facility underwent a £12 million+ refurbishment. The comprehensive project included the installation of all-new pipework, modern pool return fittings, complete re-tiling of the 830 cubic metre main pool, and the replacement of corroded, inefficient metal sand filters with modern, economically viable alternatives. The project's success was recognised when it was named the Commercial Pool Refurbishment Project of the Year, demonstrating that a refurbished facility can be of an award-winning, industry-leading standard.[32]

Envisioning a Future-Proofed Perth Leisure Pool

Drawing inspiration from these successful projects and adhering to best practice guidance from national bodies like Sport England [33], a comprehensive refurbishment of Perth Leisure Pool is not merely a repair job but an opportunity to create a truly future-proofed facility. The scope of such a project would include:

Complete System Overhaul: Full replacement and upgrade of all plant room equipment, including pumps, filters, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, to the highest modern efficiency standards.

Energy Synergy Integration: The design and installation of the closed-loop heat pump or heat exchanger system to capture waste heat from the Dewars Centre ice plant, making the facility a model of sustainable energy use.

Modernisation of Wet Areas: Re-tiling and refinishing of all pool tanks and surrounds using modern, safe, and durable materials, while retaining the popular layout and features of the leisure water area.

Enhanced User Experience: A complete reconfiguration of the changing rooms to a modern, family-friendly "village change" layout, alongside a full upgrade of the gym, café, and reception areas to improve functionality, appeal, and secondary revenue generation.

This blueprint for renewal would deliver a facility that is not only cheaper to build and run than a new-build alternative but is also environmentally superior and retains the unique character and community value that has made Perth Leisure Pool a cherished asset for over three decades.

7. Recommendations for Perth and Kinross Council

The evidence presented in this report overwhelmingly indicates that the refurbishment and enhancement of the existing Perth Leisure Pool at Glover Street is a superior strategy to the proposed new build at Thimblerow. It is more economically prudent over the long term, offers greater community and sporting value, and provides a unique and powerful opportunity for environmental leadership. The current path risks squandering a strategic asset, incurring unnecessary long-term costs, and delivering a facility that fails to meet the ambitions of the people of Perth and Kinross.

Based on this comprehensive analysis, Civic Prism puts forward the following clear, actionable recommendations for Perth and Kinross Council:

Immediate Pause and Review:

The Council should immediately pause all further work, planning, and expenditure related to the PH2O Thimblerow project. This will prevent the commitment of further public funds to a project whose foundational logic is demonstrably flawed, pending a full and transparent review of all available options.

Commission a Full Comparative Feasibility Study:

The Council must commission a new, independent, and comprehensive feasibility study. This study must move beyond the narrow focus on initial capital costs and directly compare the two primary options using modern, best-practice assessment methodologies. The study must include:

A 50-year **Life Cycle Cost Analysis (LCCA)** for both the Thimblerow new-build proposal and a full refurbishment/enhancement of the Glover Street site. This analysis must account for all costs, including capital, financing, demolition, operations, maintenance, and projected revenue.
A **Whole Life Carbon Assessment** for both options, quantifying the "embodied carbon" of new construction versus the "avoided carbon" of refurbishment, as well as projected operational emissions over a 50-year lifespan.
A detailed **technical and financial model of an integrated heat exchange system** between a refurbished Perth Leisure Pool and the Dewars Centre, quantifying the potential energy, cost, and carbon savings.
Renewed Public and Stakeholder Consultation:

Following the completion of the new feasibility study, the Council must initiate a new, genuine, and transparent consultation process. This process must actively engage with the public and key stakeholder groups—including Perth City Swim Club, Scottish Curling, the Perth and Kinross Community Sports Network, and other facility users—to build a consensus vision for the future of leisure in Perth. The findings of the comparative study should form the evidence base for this consultation, allowing for an informed public debate that leads to a decision that truly represents the best long-term interests of the community.

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