

New Leisure Centre - Frequently Asked Questions

Why are we building the new leisure centre in Ayr Town Centre?

During the 2018 'Ayr Your Views' consultation, just under half of all respondents said they never use the Citadel Leisure Centre and the reasons for this varied. Some felt the facilities were tired, old fashioned and in poor condition. Others felt it was too remote, out of the way, not on bus routes and not pleasant to walk to. The majority of those surveyed felt the Citadel should be replaced with a more modern facility and if it were to move closer to the town centre then a third of respondents would use it more often than they do now.

Recognising the age and condition of the Citadel Leisure Centre, and the public views on the matter, the Council have decided to replace it with a new leisure facility closer to the town centre. Developers are planning to create a new cinema and food and beverage outlets at the Kyle Centre and there is an opportunity for the new leisure centre to link up with this development creating a strong leisure and entertainment hub in the centre of town that is easily accessible by car, public transport and on foot. These changes could not only help to improve the town centre but help us to get fit for our future.

It is anticipated that a move to the town centre will provide a catalyst for the regeneration of the Arran Mall and Hourstons whilst also generating much needed additional footfall and economic vitality for the town centre. This project is a key element, which together with the Kyle Centre Development, will create a leisure and recreation zone in the middle section of the high street that would see the transformation of an area currently occupied by the Arran Mall and Kyle Centre into a complex offering sports, cinema, dining and recreation day and night creating a bustling town centre for people to live, work and shop.

Why are we not spending the money on the Citadel

The costs to refurbish the Citadel and bring it up to modern standards have been estimated at £22.7m and is based on an estimated amount for backlog maintenance and elemental costs for upgrading the building fabric and services. Although this would address the existing issues with the fabric and services of the building, you would still be left with many of the operational issues that only a purpose-built new facility could address such as the inability to grow the 'learn to swim' programme and respond to new trends in fitness and wellbeing.

Extensive remodelling would also be required which would add to these costs and result in the closure of the Citadel for a period of 12 to 18 months whilst the works were undertaken. Users and sports clubs would be required to find alternative facilities elsewhere. The replacement of the Citadel with a new build in the Town Centre would avoid lengthy closures and disruption to users and clubs.

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What will I be able to do in the new Leisure Centre?

Several different spaces will be provided to encourage more people to be more active, more often. These include:

- A bright and welcoming **entrance foyer** that will house the main reception, a small shop, a **café** with views into the swimming pools, a **soft play area** and an external terrace.
- Two flexible **multipurpose studios** that can accommodate a range of activities e.g. spin classes, aerobics, pilates, yoga and martial arts. The 2 studios are divided by a moveable partition which can be folded back to create one larger space for bigger gatherings/classes. A dedicated **spin studio** will have interactive sound/lighting.
- A multi station **fitness suite** with cutting edge cardio equipment and free weights that can adapt to changing fitness trends. The number of stations will be dependant on the final layout but we are targeting a number of around 130 to 150 stations.
- A main **8 lane competition pool** with a moving floor that can be used for public swimming sessions, lessons, galas and aquarobics. The flexibility this provides means that we can also increase our swimming lesson programme without disruption to other pool users. **Spectator seating** will be located in the pool hall for competitions and will provide a viewing gallery for swimming lessons with its own vending area for drinks and snacks.
- A smaller **flexible pool** with a moving floor that not only can also be used in tandem with the main pool for public swimming sessions, lessons and aquarobics but also as a warmup pool for competitions, and an extension to the interactive water zone for inflatables and pool games.
- An **interactive water zone** with a range of large and small water features such as water slides/flumes, playrigs, sprays, jets and bubble spouts which we hope will be enjoyed by families who live in and visit the area.
- A **health and well-being centre** with **consultation rooms** for medical referrals, and dietary, fitness and general health advice; and a **flexible multi-purpose space** that not only can be used for the health and well-being exercise and rehabilitation programmes but also as a general space for other public use such as birthday parties and activity clubs. This will also allow us to work with colleagues in Health to provide access to a range of other activities which will support physical and mental wellbeing.

The new venue will be much more accessible and inclusive, with much improved changing facilities, Changing Places Toilets as well as much easier and dignified access to the pools for disabled and mobility impaired customers.

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What are the reasons behind the proposed pool configurations?

The combination of an 8 lane, 25m main pool, a smaller flexible pool and an interactive water zone, offers the maximum increased flexibility of pools that is desperately needed by all water users (general public, Learn2Swim, Swim club, aqua classes, parties etc).

At present around 300 new Swim Lesson customers are on a waiting for a space at the Citadel. The proposed pool configuration would meet all of the latent demand and comfortably accommodate an increase of capacity by at least 50%.

South Ayrshire Council currently operate one of the most successful school and nursery swimming lesson programmes in Scotland, however these are at capacity due to the inability to overlap with public swimming access required at the same time as when the schools and nurseries want to attend. The proposed pool configuration for the new leisure centre would create increased flexibility allowing schools to operate from a secure, separate teaching pool while the public are in the main pool. The additional flexible configuration of space across the main and teaching pools ensures that swimming lessons and club membership can grow whilst also increasing public swimming and water-based fitness and rehabilitation classes by 20 to 30%.

The new pool configuration would allow the South Ayrshire Swim Team to increase usage by up to 50%. The proposed 25m x 8-lane pool will also allow an increase in numbers attending club and regional level competitions by 20-30%.

Below is a table comparing average monthly attendance of the existing Citadel and projected increase in capacity for monthly attendance in the new facility;

Activity	Average monthly attendance	Projected (New facility)
Learn 2 Swim	3200	4000-5000
General Swim (Monthly memberships)	2550	3500
Adult Swim (Casual book)	1100	1500
South Ayrshire Swim Team	1000	2000-2500
Junior Swim (Casual book)	670	3000-4000
School Swimming	550	800-1000
AquaFit	200	300
Summer Holiday Swim Programme	4000 (July/Aug combined)	10000 (July/Aug combined)

It is anticipated that the annual wet side attendance figures would increase by 60,000 - 100,000 attendances per year with the current proposals. The ambition of the new building is to encourage people to be more active and have fun, catering for everyone whatever their age, level of fitness and gender whether in groups or individually.

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Why will a games hall and diving facilities not be included in the new facility?

It is proposed that some of the facilities that are currently provided at the Citadel Leisure Centre will not be replicated in the new facility. A traditional main games hall is not currently included within the design, as sports which are traditionally played in this type of arena can be accommodated within our existing sports facilities and our Education Estate.

Within South Ayrshire there are a number of new schools built within the past 10 years with excellent facilities to participate in sports and leisure activities such as badminton, indoor football, handball, hockey, gymnastics, volleyball, etc. This includes our secondary schools at Ayr Academy, Marr College, Belmont Academy, Queen Margaret Academy and Prestwick Academy, primary schools and activity centres. This approach will ensure that these facilities which are based within our communities, are used more effectively to widen participation and help reduce the need to travel long distances.

Other facilities that will not be replicated include saunas, squash courts and diving boards. When reviewed from an operational perspective, it is not felt that these activities are economically sustainable nor form part of the Council's sports/leisure development focus going forward. The inclusion of these facilities into the design would have a significant impact on the ability to increase participation levels for dry and swim-based activities/lessons and would not contribute to the flexible approach we are aspiring to. For example, if diving was to be included, a separate dive tank would be required as HSE recommends against sharing water with other sports. Further, recent investigations have established that a high water table exists on the site and would dictate a much more complicated and costly build if a dive tank were to be provided. Due to the additional area and costs, the introduction of a dive tank would result in the loss of other facilities that are currently being proposed for the new leisure centre.

The project's aspirations, in line with Scottish Government targets and SAC commitments, is for the facility to be Net Zero Carbon in operation and will be the first of its kind in Scotland. A dive tank, with a large depth of water and space heating requirements would increase the overall energy demand of the facility significantly, putting the realisation of this goal at significant risk. We do understand that this will be disappointing to those who currently use our diving facilities, however the number of people who do is very small compared to other users and the impact on the rest of the facility would be disproportionate.

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[How will the building respond to the Council's Climate Change commitments?](#)

The building is being designed with Net Zero Carbon ambitions and will take advantage of solar gain and be constructed with high levels of insulation to minimise heat-loss. An all-electric energy strategy is being pursued (no fossil fuels will be brought into the site) and renewable technologies such as photovoltaic panels will be employed.

[How many parking spaces will be provided at the new development?](#)

One of the reasons we are building the new leisure centre in the town centre is because it will be much better connected to the public transport and cycle networks compared to the Citadel. There are also approximately 2000 parking spaces within 5-minute walk of the new site. It is currently proposed to provide 80 parking spaces within the site, including 8 accessible spaces, as well as 30 cycle spaces. We are also in discussions with the neighbouring developer of the Kyle Centre to look at a sharing arrangement where parking is pooled which will offer flexibility to service demand as and when required.

[What will be the hours of operation of the new facility?](#)

The opening hours are still to be decided, but will be at least in line with current hours of operation:

Monday-Friday – 06:00-22:00
Saturday-Sunday – 08:00-18:00

However, to support increased access opportunity and community use, there is the desire to increase weekend availability where possible.

[What will be the membership and hire terms of the new facility?](#)

Membership prices will be subject to review, however membership type is likely to be similar to be the current arrangement, with various agreements available for Gym, Swim, Classes and All Inclusive memberships along with the ability to pay for activities on a pay as you go basis. Birthday parties will be available in the facility with pool inflatable and fun options, and opportunity for alternative space for 'dry' parties. Room/area hire will be made available for local groups and clubs to support as much of the community to utilise the facility as possible.