

Dame Meg Hillier MP  
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16 March 2023

Dear Dame Meg,

**FOLLOW UP TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE ON  
ENERGY BILLS SUPPORT ON 27 FEBRUARY 2023.**

I am writing to update the Committee on the recent action the government has taken to address the challenges facing leisure centres. At the PAC hearing on Energy Bills Support on 27 February, I agreed to Mr Nick Smith MP's request to write on this issue.

In recognition of the challenges faced by this sector, the Chancellor announced, as part of the Spring Budget on 15 March, over £60 million to safeguard public swimming pools in England. This funding will be made available for 2023-24 and includes over £20 million in support to public swimming pool providers who are facing immediate cost burdens as a result of high operating pressures. It also provides £40 million for longer-term capital investments in energy efficiency measures to reform facilities, reduce future operating costs and deliver long-term sustainability. The devolved administrations will receive Barnett consequentials from this funding which they can use to support their public leisure sector should they choose.

This funding is on top of the measures I set out to the Committee on 27 February, including the unprecedented levels of support provided for energy costs over the winter by the Energy Bills Relief Scheme, and from 1 April further support will be provided through the new Energy Bills Discount Scheme, which will run until 31 March 2023.

For Local Authorities the Autumn Statement 2022 provided access to up to an additional £2.8 billion for adult social care, discharge, and other services in 2023-24, increasing to £4.7 billion in 2024-25. The Local Government Finance Settlement confirmed that every local authority in England will see at least a 3% increase in core spending power in 2023-24 before any local decisions around council tax are taken.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Bowler', with a stylized, cursive script.

James Bowler  
Permanent Secretary