



Ledbury  
Annual Town Meeting

Brian White  
Chairman of HALO  
Halo Leisure Services  
Limited, Lion House,  
Broad Street, Leominster,  
Herefordshire, HR6 8BT

Nick Bitel  
Chair of Sport England  
21 Bloomsbury Street,  
London,  
WC1B 3HF

Dear Mr White & Mr Bitel

**Re: Refurbishment of Ledbury Swimming Pool**

I write on behalf of the residents of Ledbury as a result of a unanimous vote taken at the Annual Town Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2016.

The Swimming Pool in Ledbury is a valued and very well used facility. It is long overdue for refurbishment and all residents are relieved that this is now going to happen. There is only one sour note; the conversion of the separate changing rooms to the mixed gender "Village Style". From the earliest stages of the planning process, Ledbury residents objected to this specific alteration. The Town Council has made representations to Herefordshire Council and members have expressed their own concerns to HALO staff at the Swimming Pool.

Recently HALO held an Open Day giving residents an opportunity to view the plans of the refurbished facility and ask questions. One of our former Councillors attended specifically to ask questions about the changing rooms. When he arrived at the event, a female resident was in the process of putting a question on this subject. The HALO representative stated that Village Style Changing was an absolute requirement of Sport England funding. He explained that Sport England view the move to communal changing areas as providing greater safeguarding for vulnerable users. Sport England has made a significant contribution to this project; and without this money, the refurbishment could not proceed.

The former Councillor gave a report at our recent Annual Parish Meeting and asked that the Town Council investigate why this refurbishment is implementing a change that is against the will of the majority of residents. One of our Herefordshire Councillors informed the meeting that she had contacted Sport England and been informed that the organisation is agnostic about Village Style or separate gender changing rooms. There were over 90 residents at the meeting and they were incensed, as it appears that, they may have been misled by one of your organisations and as things stand, the town is still not getting the facility it desires. The meeting voted unanimously for the Council to pursue this matter further.

May we address the issue of safeguarding vulnerable users? Village Style changing is not new to local residents. The nearest pool outside of Ledbury is in Great Malvern and this has had communal changing for over twenty years. There have been serious incidents in these changing rooms with the latest reported in November last year. The local newspaper reported that Police were hunting for a voyeur taking

pictures in the changing rooms. Reports like this we believe underlie many objections that have come from female pool users; especially mothers of teenage girls.

We have copied this letter to a number of our elected representatives as this situation has demonstrated again the seemingly empty promise of greater local decision-making. This is exactly the type of local issue that should be the purview of Parish electors. We are very concerned that unelected quasi-governmental organisations are still paying scant attention to the people who are the true owners of this local facility.

At this late stage, it is still our hope that HALO can amend the plans to give the residents what they have requested. We hope for a positive response from both your organisations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Crowe'.

Cllr Annette Crowe  
Town Mayor

Copies to  
The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government  
Bill Wiggin MP  
Herefordshire Councillors  
Chairman of Herefordshire Council  
Herefordshire Market Towns Forum