

Nuneaton and Bedworth Swimming Club

Member's Information Sheet – June '07

Many of you will be aware that annual price increases take place at this time of year and will not be surprised to hear that the Leisure Trust have increased prices again between 3-4% from April '07. Following this announcement they advise the BATS subsidy will also be removed from 1-July '07 – this equates to a 242% increase on BATS water time – BATS water time make up 46% of all our pool usage for club swimming. The BATS side of our swimming allows us to provide professional training for the Borough's developing athletes – a long standing local authority initiative. This announcement comes without any discussion with the club or any consideration on what it means to the young swimmers within the Borough.

Nuneaton SC merged with Bedworth SC, at the Local Authorities request, to cut out inefficiencies in water usage between the two clubs. This has been done and 14 hrs of water time returned to the local authority for public leisure purposes. Your club is accredited to the ASA' Swim21 Award and funds experienced coaches professionally qualified to the highest qualifications in the country, working with BATS, to programme our teaching and coaching operations. We are ranked 3rd top club out of 107 clubs in the West Midlands (after Birmingham and Coventry) in getting swimmers up to Regional and National level and as such provide world class development opportunities for the communities young athletes.

Sadly, we have seen our total charges increased rather than decreased for pool hire despite the operational efficiencies and quality improvements carried out by us. This price increase strategy has been particularly evident, and more aggressive, since the new pool was built, and Nuneaton and Bedworth Leisure Trust took control. NBSC's pool hire charges went up by 106% when the new pool was built and has increased between 3-9% annually since then to the extent that we are now being charged, with lifeguard, up to £80.20 per hour for pool use. No other club in the Country is being charged at this rate. When you realise the utility bills (gas, electricity, water etc.) are not charged against the Leisure Trust, they are paid by the Council out of your local council rates – so what are we paying these extortionately high charges for? Even though we have been awarded Community Amateur Sports Club status by the Inland Revenue which should in turn provide significant rate relief benefits for the local authority. To date these awards achieved by your club have not received any material benefits from your Local Authority at all.

Many of you who have children in regular training with the club, children who are not roaming the streets being a nuisance or becoming obese, have been protesting the extortionately high cost of club swimming within the borough for some time now without any response back from the Local Authority. To put these price increases into perspective swim club membership has dropped from 800 members to 330 members as more and more families have children priced out of club swimming by the local authority. Well the Council's response is another 242% increase in BATS charges over and above the annual price increases. Obviously this cannot be sustained and the club has advised the Leisure Trust that it will be bankrupted by this extortionate increase and have asked for a meeting with the Leisure Trust and the Council (pool owners). This was over a month ago and to date we have had no response from them.

If we share these costs across the whole club your monthly charges will have to be increased by at least 35%. National and Regional training costs will increase from £59 to £80 pm and all other monthly charges will increase by 35% as well. To put this increase into perspective – Coventry charge £64pm and Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds charge approx £66pm for their international athletes to train in 50m pools 26hrs/wk.

Your club seriously needs help if we want it to continue providing first class training, or any training at all, for the young children in our community. At these prices we can only provide for the affluent members of our community and this increase will move club swimming towards the more affluent members of the community – if we still exist. Only the Council can make our first class services available to the whole community and improve water safety, health and fitness and take more youngsters off the streets and reduce crime. We are doing our best but wonder why we are not appreciated – particularly as we do all our work voluntarily to benefit our community.

Tony Green, Chair