

SIH (Ice Hockey) Ltd, Scottish Ice Hockey

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To: Members of the Communities Committee

Subject: Time Capsule Ice Rink – Request for Further Scrutiny, Consultation and Options Review

Dear Members of the Communities Committee,

I am writing in my capacity as Chairman of Scottish Ice Hockey, on behalf of the sport and the wider community of ice users, regarding the proposal to redevelop the ice rink at the Time Capsule.

At the outset, I want to recognise and respect the financial and operational challenges outlined within the report. We fully appreciate the responsibility placed upon the Council to ensure that facilities remain sustainable and continue to serve the needs of the wider community.

However, I have a number of significant concerns regarding both the process followed to date and the basis upon which this recommendation has been brought forward.

Consultation and Process

As presented, the proposal progresses directly to a preferred redevelopment option without clear evidence of meaningful prior consultation with those most directly affected—namely clubs, governing bodies, and regular users of the facility.

While the report references engagement with users to help shape any replacement provision, this is not the same as consultation on the principle of removing the ice rink itself.

For a decision of this scale and impact, good governance would normally include:

- early engagement with affected stakeholders
- a structured options appraisal, including retention and alternative operating models
- collaborative solution development prior to presenting a preferred option

At present, it is not evident that this level of engagement and options development has taken place.

There are also relevant examples elsewhere in Scotland that demonstrate the value of a different approach. In Moray, the future of Elgin Ice Rink was similarly under threat. Through meaningful consultation and the establishment of a working group involving users and stakeholders, a collaborative process was undertaken to explore commercial and operational improvements. This resulted in enhanced commercialisation and ultimately helped secure the long-term future of the facility.

This demonstrates that, with the right level of engagement and structured problem-solving, sustainable models can be developed to retain ice provision.

Demand, Growth and Utilisation

It is important to recognise that ice sports are not declining in popularity—they are evolving and, in many areas, growing across the UK.

Participation models are shifting toward more flexible, accessible formats, including small-area and short-format versions of the game such as 3-on-3 hockey, now played at international level. These formats align strongly with the Council's own stated priorities around accessible, social, and community-based activity.

However, the current operation of the facility does not appear to fully optimise its potential:

- limited and inflexible ice availability, including early closure times
- restricted access for emerging formats and wider participation models
- limited integration with broader leisure and community programming

Taken together, this raises the question of whether current usage levels reflect true demand, or simply the constraints of the current operating model.

Commercial and Operational Opportunities

It is not clear that a comprehensive commercial options review has been undertaken.

There are a number of potential opportunities that do not appear to have been fully explored, including:

- commercial sponsorship and naming rights
- extended opening hours to increase saleable ice time
- revised pricing structures aligned to demand
- enhanced food and beverage provision linked to rink usage

- development of new participation formats and programmes
- broader commercial partnerships, events, and community integration

Collectively, these represent a range of levers that could materially improve both utilisation and financial performance.

We believe there is a credible opportunity to address the current funding shortfall through a well-developed and properly consulted commercial strategy. This should include a review of key cost drivers, including energy procurement and tariff arrangements, to ensure that all reasonable opportunities to reduce operating costs have been fully explored.

Alternative Operating Models

There are also practical operating models that could be considered to reduce costs while increasing utilisation.

For example, a seasonal or hybrid model—where the ice surface is lifted for a defined period each year—could:

- significantly reduce energy consumption and associated costs
- allow for alternative activities such as roller sports and other community uses
- broaden the facility’s user base and revenue streams
- support a more flexible and modern leisure offering

This type of approach is already used successfully elsewhere and warrants proper consideration.

Governance, Evidence and Scrutiny

Given the role of the Committee as elected decision-makers, it is important to consider whether the proposal, as currently presented, meets the standard of scrutiny and due diligence expected for a decision of this scale.

In particular, whether Members can be satisfied that:

- all reasonable options have been explored
- meaningful engagement has taken place with affected stakeholders
- the data presented reflects the full potential of the facility
- the wider impact on participation, pathways, and community sport has been fully assessed

I would also ask whether Members are confident that the current evidence base and level of assurance would withstand appropriate public scrutiny.

If this level of assurance is not yet in place, there is a clear risk that the Committee is being asked to take a decision without the full range of information and options that would normally be expected.

Request

Given the above, I would respectfully ask the Committee to:

- clarify what consultation has taken place to date
- confirm whether retention and improvement options have been fully explored
- pause the decision to allow structured engagement and solution development with stakeholders

There is a genuine opportunity to work collaboratively to develop a sustainable and modern model that retains ice provision while addressing financial challenges.

In the interests of transparency and wider stakeholder awareness, this correspondence will also be shared with the Scottish Ice Hockey community and published.

Scottish Ice Hockey, alongside our clubs and wider partners, stands ready to support that work constructively.

Yours sincerely,



John Colley

Chairman

Scottish Ice Hockey

CC: sportscotland, Ice Hockey UK (IHUK), England Ice Hockey (EIH), Des Murray (N Lanarkshire CEO), John Swinney (First Minister of Scotland), Jim Logue (Elected Member Leader).