

Stop, Think & Swim on the Isles of Scilly



Overview

Council of the Isles of Scilly (IOS) instructed V4 Services Ltd (V4S) to undertake a 'Stop & Think' report on the potential provision of a community swimming pool on the island of St Mary's. V4S began the project in October 2022. The aim of the brief was to investigate and analyse the options for a replacement pool in terms of:

- Pool sizes and configurations
- The range of energy efficient models
- Operational models
- The potential funding options for the Council

IOS are located south-west of Cornwall, with five inhabited and 150 uninhabited islands. The population in 2020 was 2,226. The islanders currently use the facilities at Normandy Pool which is over 14 years' old and is reaching the end of its economic life. The pool is relatively inaccessible, situated outside the main town of St Mary's with limited access by public transport and with poor car parking facilities on site.

Working in partnership with LA architects, a specialist sports and leisure architectural practice, V4S undertook the 'Stop & Think' project to consider the options of a community swimming pool that could serve the people of St Mary's for years to come.

The Challenge

V4S clarified the challenges, opportunities and constraints, for the provisions of the swimming facilities on the island. Working with LA architects, we explored the full range of options available.

The key considerations for IOS were:

- Who the new pool should service, whether the community or community and tourists as well.
- Where it should be located on the island.
- How to provide the best value for money, with a fixed budget.

In considering the above challenges, the solutions needed to be both affordable at the point of construction and sustainable in terms of long-term operating costs.



There were several reasons for considering a new community pool, including:

- The existing pool was beyond its economic life expectancy, inefficient to operate and had a high carbon impact.
- The condition of Normandy Pool had very limited appeal to islanders and none to tourists.
- The size of the existing pool limited its ability to serve the local community, being able to cater to just one lesson or activity at a time.
- Accessibility was difficult. Staff were travelling between two facilities and there weren't any modern accessibility standards.

The Solution

V4S undertook the project by clearly establishing the high-level objectives, factoring in the unique requirements of the authority and the local community.

With these in mind, criteria and weightings against which to evaluate any potential solutions were established and appropriately scored.

Through discussions with key stakeholders, eight options were considered and evaluated.

These included:

- The 'do nothing' option, effectively leading to a managed decline.
- The 'Ultra Basic' pool (2 options), which would exclusively serve the community.
- The complete swimming experience (again 2 options), which would also provide a destination for tourists, particularly families visiting the island.

Each option was considered against the following:

- The essential needs of the community and then those of the tourists to the island (a key source of income for both the island and islanders themselves).
- Affordability in terms of investment costs.
- Long-term costs of operation.

The best location for the pool was also considered as part of this project. While there were only limited options available, the report proposed that the new community pool should be located beside the island's school.

With sketches supplied by LA architects, V4S developed indicative costs for each option. The risks were also thoroughly assessed and detailed into the 'Stop & Think' report presented to IOS' internal team for consideration.

The Outcome

A presentation based around the 'Stop & Think' report was presented to the island's councillors', during a discussion meeting for initial consideration. While the presentation / report and the various options included were well-received, the Councillors considered that now was not the time to progress to the next stage for the community pool, given the number and magnitude of other projects currently being undertaken.

Nevertheless, IOS is now in a good position to proceed with a new community swimming pool in the future, should it decide to do so – possessing a greater understanding of the implications and approaches thanks to the collaborative efforts between V4S and LA Architects.