

Making Waves

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Govanhill—'you don't know if your in Bengal or Donegal'—is situated in the South side of Glasgow within the Shettleson parliamentary constituency. This is the unhealthiest constituency in the UK and at the last general election had the lowest voter turn out in Scotland and the second lowest in the UK. Govanhill Pool is an Edwardian Baroque building with three swimming pools, a sauna, gym and Turkish suite. Purpose built and part of the area since 1914, it is still in excellent condition. In January 2001, Charlie Gordon, leader of Glasgow City Council, announced that the pool was to be closed. The Council set a date of closure for 31st March that same year despite a petition signed by twelve thousand citizens protesting the decision.

The Council gave the local community and the South side of Glasgow just fourteen working days to respond to this proposed closure.¹ No formal announcement was made. The closure came to light in the Council's annual budget proposals that were not made available to the community, though a snippet about the proposed closure appeared in the press. In response, local people formed the 'Glasgow's Govanhill Pool: South Side Against Closure' (SSAC) and began a sit-in of the building on the 21st March. The Council enlisted the support of the police to break into the building and effectively closed it on the 29th March. Soon after the Council drained the water from the pools. SSAC's occupation of Govanhill Pool lasted one-hundred and forty-one days before finally being forcefully and violently brought to an end by Strathclyde Police on the 7th August 2001, acting on the orders of Glasgow City Council and in support of the Sheriff's Officers. Throughout the occupation SSAC maintained a picket line outside the building. This became the "hub of the community" and continued after the eviction until March 2002. SSAC continue in their fight for Govanhill Pool to be re-opened as public swimming pools with a health living centre for the benefit of the whole community.

In the autumn of 2001, after a good eight months of campaigning, SSAC decided to do what the Council had failed to do: consult the local people. 'Govanhill Pool: the impact of closure and a consultation with former users, a study' was designed by SSAC members who were working in academia, local government, planning and health services, and who were experienced in research methods. Resources did not allow for a 'scientific sampling' of respondents. However, as the study proceeded and the results were analysed the method of 'distributing' and interviewing revealed that a cross-section of the South side community and pool users had in fact been effectively included in their survey. The survey therefore contained the best of both methodological worlds: it was a survey based on and contained 'hard' data, whilst it built a qualitative picture of what people really felt at the time. In this sense, the findings and the interpretation of them can be taken to be rigorous and valid.

The survey's questionnaire² took account of age, gender, health, employment and ethnicity. Of all those surveyed 55% were no longer swimming. The results showed that the closure had a greater effect on those over 60, with 69% of survey participants over 60 no longer swimming compared with 54% of 41-60 year olds, 52% of 26-40 year olds and 40% of 16-25 year olds.

Within the small sample of Indian and Pakistani swimmers the survey revealed that since closure 90% of survey participants had not used other facilities. Throughout the campaign the



Council had been made aware that the new facilities which people had been directed to were particularly unsuitable for much of the Asian population: the glass walls and open design of pools at Gorbals and Bellahouston are prohibitive to Muslim women in particular. Govanhill Pool as an Edwardian enclosed swimming pool permitted both private and segregated swimming for men and women, a feature which led to the pool being identified in a SportScotland³ study on 'Ethnic Minorities and Sport' as a best practise example of breaking down barriers to participation in sport.

77% of survey participants who were unemployed were no longer using other facilities, compared to 40.7% of those in full-time employment. 68.7% of those who were sick or disabled and not fit to work were no longer using other facilities, and 75% of those retired.

Car owners were more likely to be using other swimming facilities than non-car owners and most car owners were in full or part-time employment. Car ownership did have an influence on whether full-time employees were still swimming.

So, the closure of Govanhill Pool has most severely effected the old, the poor, the sick and disabled, the unemployed and ethnic minorities. So much for social inclusion.

SSAC's study concluded that:

- the public want the baths to be reopened
- all three swimming pools should be reopened
- the rest of the building should be developed into a healthy living centre
- the facility should remain in public ownership but with real local representation to avoid the problems of the past

To have the local resources and personnel to take on the responsibility of carrying out your own survey is to the credit of the inspired 'South Side Against Closure Campaign'. Other organisations have also contributed their support to the campaign, such as 'Glasgow Letters on Architecture and Space'⁴—who provided publicity for the survey at the 'Making Waves' two day conference organised by SSAC in March 2002⁵—and students from Glasgow School of Art.

Earlier on in the year in February 2001, Glasgow City Council, under pressure from campaigners and after announcing the pool's closure, announced a budget of £30,000 for their own study: 'Feasibility Study of the Pool Complex'. A study that would be put out to tender and would take two months to complete. In June 2001 the multinational company EDAW in association with Page and Park Architects were appointed to do the Council's study. In January 2002, almost a year



later, EDAW confirmed to SSAC they had delivered their report to Glasgow City Council. SSAC asked to see copies of this study but were told that there were some technical problems with it. SSAC already had problems with just how well EDAW had consulted local people: questionnaires had been found lying in closes, community sessions and discussion groups were cancelled because Glasgow City Council said they would be hijacked by SSAC members. The Council finally published its study in late June 2002. The EDAW/Park&Page report concluded that the Govanhill Pool should be developed into a centre which uses the two small pools and redevelops the main pool into a healthy living centre, it included the proposed funders for the project which would cost £3.5 million.

The report was given to the 'Southside Regeneration Group': a local group made up of representatives of the housing associations, voluntary groups and heads of local schools. No one is quite sure what the criteria is to be represented within the group and SSAC had lobbied long and hard to get involved without success. The 'Southside Regeneration Group' appointed a sub-committee to examine the legitimacy of the Council's feasibility study's figures as they appeared not to stack up. It was to the credit of this sub-committee that a representative of SSAC was invited to become a member. It was agreed at meeting, that an independent consultant should be called in to examine the figures. A further £7,000 of public money was given for the task. The consultant Archie Fairley was appointed in August 2002. In his interim report in November 2002, Fairley reported that he had contacted the various funders suggested by EDAW/Park&Page and found that they had not actually been consulted, and that the £3.5 million which they suggested for the regeneration of the pool was wildly off the mark. He estimated that there was in fact an outside chance of being able to raise £1.2 million, and that would be on the basis of half of that being "matched" by those bidding for finance. His formal conclusion in his final report states: "The main conclusion of the report is that the indicative capital funding package in the EDAW/Park&Page report is not well founded and is not feasible under current or foreseeable circumstances..." He concluded at the meeting that: "My own professional standard would not have allowed me to put my signature to such a Study."

So in December 2003, a year and a half after the feasibility study was commissioned by Glasgow City Council, it turns out not to be worth the paper it's written on. Many users of the Govanhill Pool and most community members had from the beginning believed that the Council's feasibility study commissioned after the pool was closed was a "whitewash" and a cynical ploy by

Charlie Gordon and the Council to buy time whilst the protest died down. But SSAC have not gone away!

Most of SSAC's time recently has been taken up by the process described above and by court cases 'relating' to their campaign. On the night that the campaigners were violently evicted by Strathclyde Police,

many ordinary men, women and children were physically and psychologically injured. SSAC called for a full public inquiry into the behaviour of Strathclyde Police. This was refused but an "independent" inquiry was set up. This involved

the investigation of Strathclyde Police by Fife Police, the Chief Constable of which was until three years ago the Assistant Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police. On the night of the eviction no charges were brought against any members of SSAC. However, in January 2002 after the report by Fife Police was given to the Procurator Fiscal, nine people—all members of SSAC, seven of which are Muslim—were charged with various offences relating to the night of the eviction. SSAC made eighteen complaints about Strathclyde Police behaviour to the Fife Police Inquiry, twelve of these have been abandoned and six are under review by the Procurator Fiscal. SSAC don't believe that the six under review will go any further until all the court cases against SSAC members have been heard.

'South Side Against Closure' have now been in existence for almost two years. They are fighting for local democracy, for their voices to be heard. They have lost all faith in local Councillors who are meant to be in power to represent them. Councillors are furiously rubbishing the survey SSAC carried out and accuse them of wanting to hijack council tax money for their own ends. It is obvious to anyone who has come in contact with this campaign that rather than taking from the community they continue to give: their time, their expertise as individuals, their intellect and creativity. At the time in Glasgow when there was demonstrations against the murder of Firsat Yildiz Dag, a Kurdish refugee—where demonstrators had to run a gauntlet of local white youths and adults in Sighthill—across the city Asian youth, white housewives and children, elderly Asian men, shopkeepers and professionals were all coming together to fight for their community.

SSAC meet every Monday evening, for more information on their continuing campaign see: www.saveourpool.co.uk

Notes

- 1 In fact it transpired that the Council made this decision in October 2000 and told no-one. Local Labour Councillors although aware of the proposed closure simply kept quiet. No assistance was given to the community or users to argue a case against closure and the only "offer" was to relocate and "direct" users to "state of the art" pools 3 and 4 miles away.
- 2 A questionnaire was piloted extensively in the community in order to be sure the questions were both appropriate to the task and technically viable. As a result community members themselves made suggestions and assisted in the development of the instrument and study design. Every attempt was made to ensure that the questions allowed all views to be expressed from the wide range of community members. There emerged a strong view that the questionnaire should be administered on a face to face basis so that an opportunity could be given to respondents to explain or expand on their views as they addressed specific questions. A team of local people involved in the campaign were given training in face to face interviewing in order to ensure rigour and consistency.
3. State of the art pools are being built with European and government money and through SportScotland government money. SportScotland has given £21.5 million to Glasgow for sport and recreation facilities. It has produced major statements about the need to regenerate communities and implement social inclusion strategies—in association with the Scottish Executive, the documents 'The Role of Sport in Regenerating Deprived Communities', and what it calls "the settled will" of the Scottish people in a document called 'Sport 21'. Both are replete with statements about social inclusion, health, recreation and sport.

The Glasgow strategy of closing old pools and building new ones (with SportScotland money) has ignored the advice and recommendations of its funders. For example the document above states clearly: "All providers should evaluate cur-

rent programmes and the extent to which they are addressing all aspects of social inclusion." In the case of the Govanhill Pool closure Glasgow City Council has not done this. The council did not conduct a social audit as to the consequences of closure. It ignored all of the research evidence about the need to keep local and recreational sports facilities open particularly in urban areas in a context of social inclusion. It can be easily demonstrated that the action to close runs counter to the Council's own policies, SportScotlands' targets on social inclusion, those of the Scottish and Westminster Parliament's. Guidelines and recent research on local community consultation from the Scottish Parliament's Executive have been ignored.

4. Glasgow Letters on Architecture and Space Ltd.
31a Errol Gardens, Glasgow, G5 0RA
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www.glas-collective.com

"GLAS are a Glasgow based co-operative of architects, teachers, writers and urban activists who are committed to fighting all manifestations of socio-spatial inequality, exploitation and deprivation." They produce the magazine GlasPaper.

5. Making Waves, 23rd-4th March 2002, Langside Halls, Glasgow

Two day community conference reflecting the impact campaigns can make locally and globally.

Out for the Night

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of wrongful imprisonment. After the first year in prison he stated that the person becomes accustomed to prison life and therefore it becomes easier for them. For this reason he introduced a sliding scale downwards for each year spent in prison thereafter. Calcutt retired two days after he submitted his report, he never met Paddy Hill, his lawyer or Dr. Grounds. MOJO believe that the Calcutt report will become a precedent, setting the agenda for future compensation claims. It took the Birmingham Six eleven years after their release to finally receive full compensation based on Calcutt's sliding scale. So for somebody like the recently released Robert Brown, who spent twenty-five years innocent in prison, he will get very little for his final year inside because life had become so easy for him... and who knows how many years it will take him to get it?

Sir David Calcutt's findings are in stark contrast to those of Dr. Adrian Grounds', an expert in the field.

MOJO want to set up a halfway house for people who have suffered miscarriages of justice so that when they are released they have somewhere to go: somewhere they can get support from people who have suffered in similar ways, counselling, a place of rehabilitation, a place that their families can use as well. They also want to set up a monitoring group. Most people would see this as an obvious step but this initiative comes from those who have suffered, not those in power. It will be a long hard struggle for MOJO to raise the necessary funds to create such a place. John McManus believes that those who hold the purse strings know exactly what's going on but don't want to admit the legal system is not perfect. In contrast, the people on the street know that nothing is perfect, that mistakes are always made. Even within the MOJO organisation mistakes will be made but he hopes that they will be open and honest enough to admit them. This is something that the judicial system and the government have not so far been willing to do. If they did they would be funding an organisation like MOJO and would see them as a checks and balance to the judicial system. MOJO are not saying that *all* police, lawyers and judges are bent. What they are saying is there *are* corrupt police, lawyers and judges and that they shouldn't be in the positions of power that they are. The whole idea of the judicial system, the government and the media playing down the significance of all the miscarriages of justice over the last ten years is to allay public fear. They want to assure us that there are no serious problems with the police and the judicial system. Yet, survey after survey show that people don't trust the police because there is plainly one law for them and one law for us. For MOJO this just can't go on. It divides society more and more and causes more and more misery. The prison population in the UK is growing at an accelerated rate and therefore there is bound to be an increase in miscarriages of justice. The 'Criminal

Case Review Commission' have already had over four thousand cases lodged with them to date.

Ideally MOJO will get public funds to set up their halfway house. At the moment they are fighting innocent people's cases and raising public awareness. They have clear ideas of how their organisation should take shape. They have charitable status and have a management committee formed of individuals with backgrounds in the legal system, human rights, and those who have suffered miscarriages of justice themselves. As the organisation grows they are aware of potential problems. Both John McManus and Paddy Hill may want to take a step back in the future. They want to put safeguards within the organisation so that it doesn't become a 'toothless tiger'; they want to ensure an equality in pay where the maximum wage that any employee can receive is that of the skilled worker's wage; they want to offer students in relevant fields such as law, journalism, psychology, double the minimum wage to work part-time; they want to make sure no one individual can bring in their own agenda to the detriment of the organisation and/or the people they are fighting for and supporting. They will continue to raise awareness and money by organising fund raising events, receiving donations, and putting on cultural events like the 'Out for the Night' benefits. One project recently initiated involves the Glasgow based artist Michael Fullerton. Paddy Hill approached Michael with the view to purchasing his painting of Lady Cosgrove, the first female judge in Scotland, exhibited in his MFA exhibition at Tramway earlier this year. Michael felt it inappropriate for this painting to be hung in the MOJO office so they decided that he would paint portraits of people who had suffered miscarriages of justice. Michael met Robert Brown before his release and photographed Robert, his mother and his aunts; he also photographed T.C. Campbell and Paddy Hill. The artist is currently working on these full-length portraits that will also reference particular Gainsborough paintings. It is intended that these paintings will be auctioned to raise money for MOJO.

If you're a DJ, actor, musician, artist and would like to get involved with a MOJO project or if you're involved in law, psychiatry, journalism, documentary making or web design and would like to volunteer your services, then get in touch with:

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Miscarriages of Justice Organisation (Scotland)
G.M.A.C. 3rd Floor 34 Albion St.
Glasgow, G1 1LH

Tel. 0141 564 1245
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Notes

1. 'Indictment: Trial by Fire', T.C. Campbell and Reg MCKay, Canongate; 'Forever Lost, Forever Gone', Paddy Joe Hill Published, Bloomsbury; 'The Star Rover', Jack London, Canongate (Rebel Inc.).