

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Glasgow Life

Updated Wednesday 18 August 2021

As a charity, Glasgow Life delivers culture and sport services on behalf of Glasgow City Council.

We are the only charity in Glasgow that supports mental, physical and economic wellbeing, and in doing so we aim to make a positive impact on citizens and communities across the city.

Prior to the pandemic, we regularly attracted more than 18m annual attendances to our venues and events, and our services were used by over 75% of the city's population as well as millions of visitors to Glasgow each year.

What impact has the pandemic had on Glasgow Life?

The pandemic has forced considerable changes to how Glasgow Life operates; affecting our ability to open venues and run the services, events and experiences we are proud of delivering for the people of Glasgow and visitors to the city.

Significantly, our £38m annual earned income; generated from people paying for Glasgow Club memberships and through fundraising, venue hires and ticket sales for our events and festivals, has been wiped out as a result of Covid.

The consequences of this loss cannot be understated as, pre-pandemic, our earned income was used to subsidise the diverse range of services and programmes Glasgow Life provides; from our sports venues, museums and libraries to our concert halls and community facilities.

Our earned income also helped to reduce the financial burden on Glasgow City Council, and contributed towards cultural, sporting and heritage assets of regional, national and international significance.

Such is the ongoing impact of the pandemic that we are forecasting a conservative income target of £6.4m, at best, in this financial year.

What does Glasgow City Council's announcement of a £100m financial guarantee for Glasgow Life mean?

Before the pandemic, Glasgow Life had an operating budget of c£115m, made up of £77m annual service fee from Glasgow City Council and £38m earned income, which disappeared almost overnight when we were required to close our doors last year in line with Government guidance.

In March this year, the Council announced a £100m financial safety net for Glasgow Life. This includes a reduced service fee of £72.8m for 2021/22 and additional Covid-19 recovery funding made available to local authorities by the Scottish Government to cover lost income.

Despite this being a near 15% reduction on our previous annual funding, it has helped to stabilise our immediate financial position and will allow us to continue to progress activity that has been ongoing throughout the pandemic; looking at how we can rebuild our income in the longer term and deliver a sustainable future for Glasgow Life.

What will the impact of the pandemic mean for Glasgow Life's workforce?

Recent media coverage regarding the future of our workforce was not from an announcement by Glasgow Life, but confirmation of a decision agreed earlier this year by Glasgow City Council in setting its 2021/22 budget and in response to a journalist's question. As part of our ongoing workforce planning and service transformation process this would originally have seen a reduction of 1,000 posts. However, following the Council's £100m funding guarantee this figure has been revised to 500 posts.

This cost saving strategy is a vital part of the recovery planning Glasgow Life has been forced to undertake as a result of the pandemic and we remain committed to Glasgow City Council's policy of no compulsory redundancies.

While our overall headcount will reduce over time this is being managed through a mix of targeted early retirement and voluntary redundancy; careful vacancy management; and supporting staff who may wish to voluntarily reduce their hours. Staff may also be offered redeployment opportunities and will be supported with appropriate training if they move to a new role.

We are committed to delivering organisational and workforce change in a transparent way; through open communication and engagement with all staff and our trade unions about the impact this will have as well as the opportunities it might bring.

Glasgow Life will be a very different organisation at the end of this transitional period, and we are asking all staff to be flexible during this process. We will continue to engage with our staff and trade unions as and when any decisions are made.

Why aren't all Glasgow Life venues reopening?

We're working hard to maximise the funding available to us and we have been clear for some time now that the £100m we received from Glasgow City Council has been allocated in full to reopening more than 90 venues across the city.

Those venues were prioritised in consultation with the Council on the basis of how we can best support the city's social and economic recovery. Without this financial security, fewer facilities would be able to reopen.

In May this year, the Council passed a motion resolving that all Glasgow Life venues should reopen as soon as funding and Scottish Government guidance allows.

Our ability to open more venues is entirely dependent on more funding becoming available and we have been proactively engaging with the Scottish and UK governments to discuss where there may be opportunities for funding support.

We recognise the strength of feeling there is about venues without reopening dates but, in the current climate, it's unrealistic to expect we can raise significant additional income this year that will support the reopening of more venues beyond those we have already announced.

Should more funding become available, then we will discuss future reopening plans with Glasgow City Council, local communities and our stakeholders.

Does moving beyond Level 0 and the removal of physical distancing mean Glasgow Life can open more venues?

No. The £100m guarantee we have been given by Glasgow City Council has been fully committed to reopening more than 90 city venues. Unless more funding becomes available, we will not be able to open any more venues beyond those we have announced.

In those venues which have already reopened, we are reviewing our current operations following the removal of physical distancing and we will continue to confirm any changes to our existing protocols through our website and social media channels where necessary.

At the current time, all staff and venue users are being encouraged to continue to keep a safe distance; to wash their hands frequently; and to wear a face-covering in all communal indoor areas (except when participating in physical activities) and while moving around our venues.

Other safety measures, including the availability of hand sanitiser and the collection of customers' details for Test and Protect purposes, will also remain in place for now.

Why haven't all of Glasgow's libraries reopened?

Library provision has been prioritised and 28 (85%) of the city's 33 libraries will reopen. As part of this, Elder Park and Woodside libraries will reopen in 2022 following significant investment and refurbishment; providing upgraded, modern spaces and services that will enhance the value of these buildings in their local communities in the long-term.

Five libraries do not yet have a reopening date. In the case of Barmulloch, this is because it is currently being operated by the NHS as a Covid vaccination centre.

The other four libraries (Whiteinch, Maryhill, Gallery of Modern Art and the Couper Institute) are historic buildings and each either requires substantial capital investment to address significant repairs or presents particular challenges in respect of Covid-safe operations.

In all of these cases, work is ongoing to explore alternative local provision, subject to additional funding becoming available, and to plan for the long-term future of the buildings.

Whilst Libraries are a statutory service there is no definition as to the scale and range of services that should be provided. The provision of an online service would suffice.

To be clear, Glasgow has not made the decision to permanently close any of its libraries whilst other cities, such as Manchester and Birmingham, have made such decisions or moved to a model of reduced service quality.

What is the position with reopening St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art?

We recognise the very significant role St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art has played in the religious life of the city and the continued importance of the role Glasgow Life can play, alongside partner organisations. We also recognise the importance of interfaith dialogue and are committed to continuing to support this.

For some time now, and significantly prior to the pandemic, Glasgow Life has been talking to Glasgow City Council and partners on the Cathedral Precinct about how we can work better together to improve the visitor experience to the medieval heart of the city. The purpose of the conversation has been to think about how to make best use of the buildings and outside spaces while reducing the cost to any single organisation.

Discussions are focussed on developing proposals whereby St Mungo Museum would house displays that tell the story of the area and faiths in Scotland, as well as have spaces for ongoing interfaith and cultural dialogue, and provide improved visitor facilities. The other aspect of this conversation is whether working together presents opportunities to collectively support the building's operating costs.

These conversations have been useful but are inevitably taking time, given the ongoing impact of the pandemic, to find the best way to work together on an ongoing basis. No concrete proposals have yet been presented for consideration or approval.

What is the People Make Glasgow Communities Programme / how can I get involved?

Glasgow Life is continuing to explore new operating models to support the reopening of more venues with Glasgow City Council including through the Council's People Make Glasgow Communities (PMGC) programme.

Launched in February this year, the PMGC initiative supports the Council's commitment of empowering communities and helping to meet the changing needs of neighbourhoods, by giving community groups and organisations the opportunity to become more involved in the venues and services they rely on.

Three Glasgow Life venues, Nethercraigs Sports Complex; Springburn Park Synthetic Pitch; and Stepford Football Centre, are already being run successfully by local organisations as part of Community Activation Pilots.

More than 300 expressions of interest have been received through the People Make Glasgow Communities programme and we are working with the Council to engage with community groups and organisations that are interested in having more of a role in Glasgow Life venues, including those outwith our current reopening plans.

For more information or to register your interest, visit www.glasgow.gov.uk/communities.

How important is Glasgow Life to the city's recovery from the pandemic?

One of the primary drivers for Glasgow City Council's creation of Glasgow Life in 2007 was our unique operating model and charitable status.

Our ability to generate income, attract funding and secure VAT and rates relief has saved the Council, and Glasgow taxpayers, more than £0.5bn in that time while continuing to provide world-class cultural and sporting services to the people of Glasgow and Scotland.

At the same time, we have had a direct role in growing the city's global reputation as an unrivalled major events host and first-choice tourism destination as well as Scotland's cultural and economic powerhouse.

To put Glasgow Life's contribution to the mental, physical and economic wellbeing of Glasgow and Scotland into context, Audit Scotland has said that a 4-5% increase will be needed in local authority expenditure in the years ahead to cover increasing demands in social care and education.

That 5% is greater than the total annual budget Glasgow City Council allocate to everything Glasgow Life manages – all 33 libraries, 33 sports centres, 26 community centres, nine museums, all of our community learning services, youth programmes, concert halls, theatres, all major events, destination marketing activities and the city's Convention Bureau; reflecting a workforce of more than 2,500 employees.

Before the pandemic, Glasgow Life had a proven track record of delivering more with less; growing annual attendances to the city's museums, libraries, concert halls, gyms, sports venues and events by some 30%, to more than 18m, while reducing our core funding from the council by 10% over the same period.

However, the immediate and sustained impact of Covid on our finances, and our limited ability to earn future income given the current landscape, means we must now look to develop a more sustainable and collaborative approach to funding culture and sport

provision in Glasgow; one which safeguards our internationally significant infrastructure and recognises the fundamental role culture and sport can play in supporting not just the city's health and social recovery, but Scotland's wider economic regeneration.

Why is there a need for a new funding model for the provision of culture and sport services in Glasgow?

There is a wealth of evidence that recognises the fundamental role culture, sport and physical activity can play in supporting not just Scotland's health and social recovery, but the country's wider economic regeneration.

Across Glasgow and the west of Scotland, tourism, hospitality, the arts, sport, heritage and culture employ almost 80,000 people and bring over £1bn to the local economy. Regularly participating in cultural and sporting activities is intrinsically linked to improvements in wellbeing, particularly in relation to positive mental health and increased social connection.

The experience of the past 18 months and the demand for Glasgow Life's services has shown just how valued and important Glasgow's cultural and sporting provision is to local people. These services are needed now more than ever in terms of protecting our citizens' wellbeing and building happier, healthier, more resilient and more productive communities in years to come.

Increasing access to culture, sport and physical activity programmes can also help to lessen our reliance on the NHS and reduce future healthcare costs.

However, in order for this to happen there needs to be an honest conversation with government, the NHS, governing bodies in sport and major culture funders about developing a new, more sustainable funding model that puts culture and sport at the heart of tackling some of society's biggest challenges and which gives communities the opportunity to have greater input into shaping how their local services are planned and delivered going forward.

Whatever the post-Covid landscape may bring, Glasgow Life's mission will remain the same: to inspire every citizen and visitor to become engaged and active in a city globally renowned for culture and sport.

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