

The provision of public swimming pools and diving facilities in London



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Chair's foreword



When London won the bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, great promises were made about the 'legacy' of these games.....There is a lot of work to be done if the 2012 Games are to live up to their promise

Team GB exceeded all expectations at the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2008. Our unprecedented number of medal winners demonstrated the value of high skills, hard work, and long preparation.

This year's success is no cause for complacency, however. The bar has been set higher and there is a great weight of expectation on our sportsmen and women to do even better in 2012.

But there is another important reason why we cannot afford to sit back. When London won the bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, great promises were made about the 'legacy' of these games. London promised a sporting legacy of increased participation in sport for everyone. Encouraging more people to swim is at the heart of plans for this legacy. If we seriously believe in achieving that legacy, we have to ask ourselves whether we can deliver it.

This report finds that, so far as swimming and diving are concerned, the legacy may not be achieved. We found that over a third of Londoners live more than 20 minutes' walk from a public swimming pool. The pools that are the most easily accessible make up only 37 per cent of swimming pools in London. Despite the focus on encouraging Londoners to swim as part of the 2012 sporting legacy, and despite plans to open more pools, anticipated pool closures for refurbishment suggest that the actual number of pools will not change significantly by 2012. Meanwhile, London's population is likely to increase during this period by nearly four per cent.

We must make sure that the Mayor's forthcoming London Legacy Plan for Sport provides an impetus for joint action. All the relevant organisations working in sport must come together to identify any gaps in current sport facilities and propose action to address these gaps.

There is a lot of work to be done if the 2012 Games are to live up to their promise. It can be done – but the necessary action must start now.

Overview

More people swimming is at the heart of plans for a sports participation legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Achieving this will require a sufficient number of easily accessible swimming pools. However, following a major mapping exercise of public swimming pool provision across London, this report shows there are significant gaps in the current provision of public pools, and this situation will not change in the next few years.

In June 2008 the Government launched its 2012 sporting legacy plans with a £140 million scheme to encourage local authorities across England to provide free swimming to the young and people over 60 years of age. It reported that, after walking, swimming was the most popular form of recreational physical activity, and that it wanted to increase the number of people who swim and swim regularly.¹

The Committee has sought to find out more about the provision of public swimming pools and also diving facilities across London. It commissioned work to map: the areas of the capital where Londoners may live more than one mile or 20 minutes walk away from a public pool now and in 2012; the availability of public transport in these areas; London's performance against targets for public water space; and the availability of diving facilities across the capital.

In summary the Committee has found:

- The number of public swimming pools in London is unlikely to grow significantly by 2012 despite the focus on swimming as part of the 2012 sporting legacy;
- Over one-third of Londoners live more than 20 minutes walk away from a public swimming pool and this will not change by 2012;
- Some Londoners who live more than 20 minutes walk from a public swimming pool also live in areas with low access to public transport;
- No region in London meets the Amateur Swimming Association's target for 13 metres² of public water area per 1,000 of the population; and
- Twenty-four London Boroughs do not have accessible diving facilities.

A major mapping exercise shows there are significant gaps in the current provision of public swimming pools, and this situation will not change in the next few years

¹ 'Before, during and after: making the most of the London 2012 Games', June 2008, DCMS, page 27

The Committee's findings suggest a need for more action to ensure a sufficient number of easily accessible public swimming pools.... The Mayor's forthcoming London Legacy Plan for Sport should provide an impetus for joint action

The detailed findings and maps are set out in the next part of this report. The focus has been on public swimming pools because these should be easily accessible to a wide range of Londoners. Other swimming pools such as those in private gyms or in schools may not be easily accessible because they have high membership fees or only certain groups can use them. The work has been undertaken in conjunction with London Swimming (part of the Amateur Swimming Association), which has provided data and expert advice, and the GLA Data Management and Analysis Group, which has produced the maps. Further details on the data and the methodology used are set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

The Committee's findings suggest a need for more action to ensure a sufficient number of easily accessible public swimming pools and more diving facilities in London. The construction of new public pools might be too costly to achieve but other, possibly more feasible, actions could include opening more school pools outside of school hours and increasing the use of temporary or mobile swimming pools.

The Mayor's forthcoming London Legacy Plan for Sport should provide an impetus for joint action. It is expected to bring together all the relevant organisations working in sport, identify any gaps in current sport facilities and propose actions to address these gaps. This report should inform the evidence base for the plan in relation to public swimming pools and diving facilities in London. It should enable the Mayor and his Commissioner for Sport to identify and develop specific actions to help ensure that all Londoners have good access to public swimming pools and diving facilities.

Detailed findings

The number of public swimming pools in London is unlikely to grow significantly by 2012 despite the focus on swimming as part of the 2012 sporting legacy

Today there are 196 public swimming pools in London.² These are pools operated by the London Boroughs for general use and comprise 37 per cent of the total number of swimming pools in the capital (530). Of the other pools, many (205 in total) are commercially operated.

Between now and 2012 it is anticipated that there will be some changes to public swimming pools in the capital with some likely to close for refurbishment and others scheduled to open. However, the overall number of public pools will not change significantly.

The location of public swimming pools today is shown in the map at figure 1. The anticipated location of public swimming pools in 2012 is shown at figure 2.

Over one-third of Londoners live more than 20 minutes walk away from a public swimming pool and this will not change by 2012

Today three million Londoners (40 per cent of the city's total population³) live further than one mile or 20 minutes walk away from a public swimming pool.⁴ Most of these people live in outer London where over half the population (53 per cent) lives more than easy walking distance from a public pool.⁵ The areas where Londoners live more than 20 minutes walk from a public pool are shown in the map at figure 1.

In the next few years there is unlikely to be any change in the proportion of Londoners living more than easy walking distance from a public pool. By 2012, an estimated 3.1 million Londoners (40 per cent

Three million Londoners live more than 20 minutes walk away from a public pool

² This is the number of individual pools. On some sites more than one pool is located and there are 104 sites of public pools in London. The maps in this report show the sites of public pools and further details of the number sites in each London Borough are included in Appendix 1 of this report

³ For 2008 the total London population is estimated at 7,512,372 based on 2006 mid year population estimates from the Office of Nat. Statistics

⁴ One of Sport England's key performance measures to show sporting choice and opportunity is the percentage of the population within 20 minutes travel time of a range of different sports facilities. Further details available on its web site

⁵ The total population for outer London is 4.539 million. Of these people, an estimated total of 2.414 million are living over 1 mile away from a public pool

There are 11 London Boroughs where over 50 per cent of the population lives more than 20 minutes walk away from a public pool

of the total population⁶) will live more than 20 minutes walk away from a public pool. Although the majority of these people are likely to live in outer London, the total number of inner London residents living more than 20 minutes walk from a public pool will increase from 580,354 in 2008 to 727,389 by 2012. The areas where Londoners will live more than 20 minutes walk from a public pool in 2012 are shown in the map at figure 2.

Although over one-third of London's total population lives more than easy walking distance from a public pool, the proportion in each London Borough obviously varies. Today there are 11 London Boroughs where over 50 per cent of the population lives more than 20 minutes walk from a public pool. In 2012 there will be a similar number of London Boroughs (10) where over 50 per cent of the population lives more than easy walking distance from a public pool.

The estimated percentage of people living more than 20 minutes walk from a public pool within each London Borough in 2008 and 2012 is shown in the graph at figure 3 and in the maps at figure 4. Further details for each London Borough are also included in a table at Appendix 1 of this report.

⁶ For 2012 the total London population is estimated at 7,807,011 based on 2007 round of GLA population projections (PLP Low)

Figure 1 – Map showing the location of public swimming pools in London in 2008 and the areas where Londoners live more than 20 minutes walk (one mile) from a public pool (shaded pink)

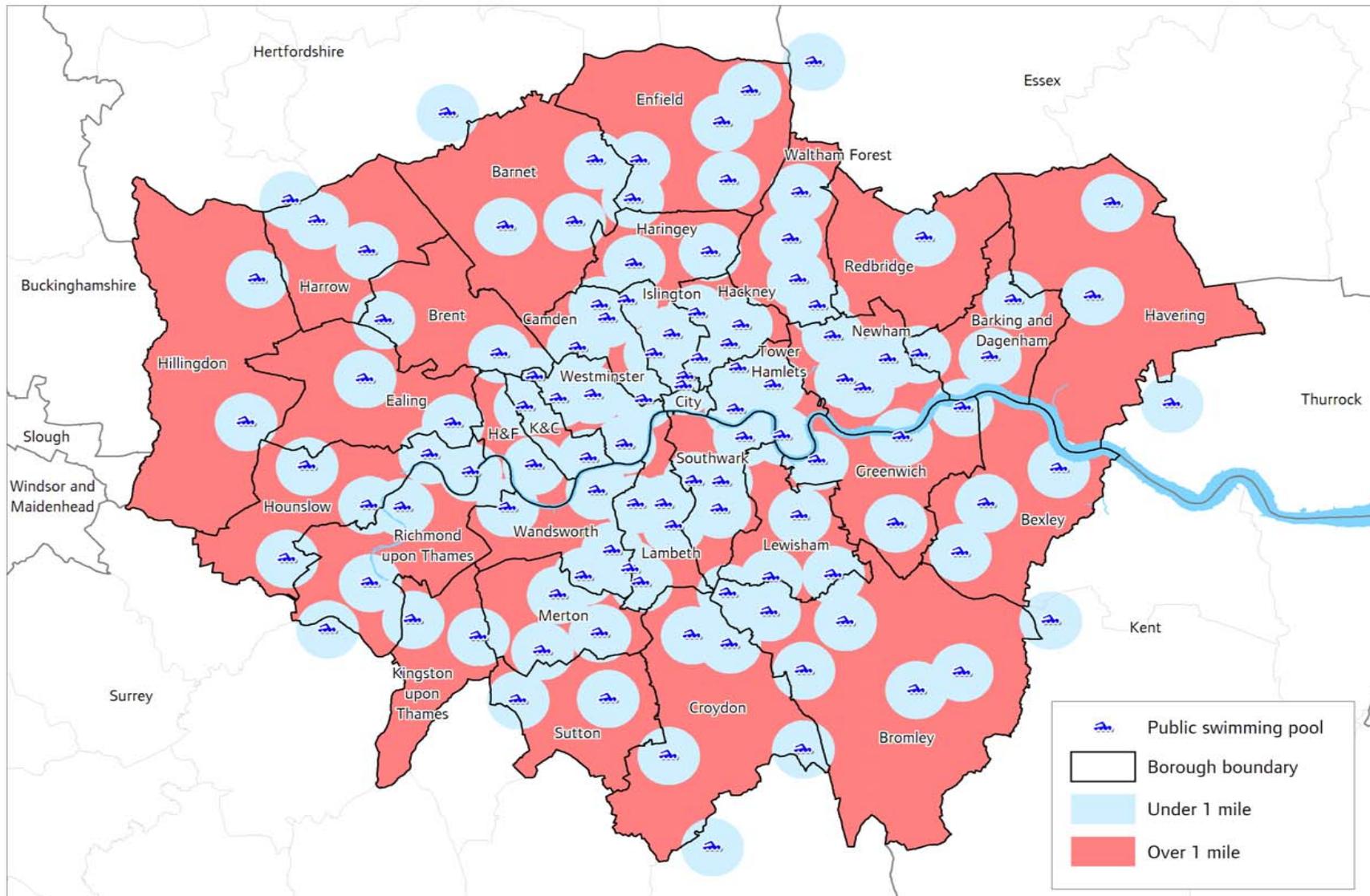


Figure 2 – Map showing the anticipated location of public swimming pools in London in 2012 and the areas where Londoners live more than 20 minutes walk (one mile) from a public pool (shaded orange). Public pools expected to close for refurbishment are marked with a red cross and those expected to open are marked green.

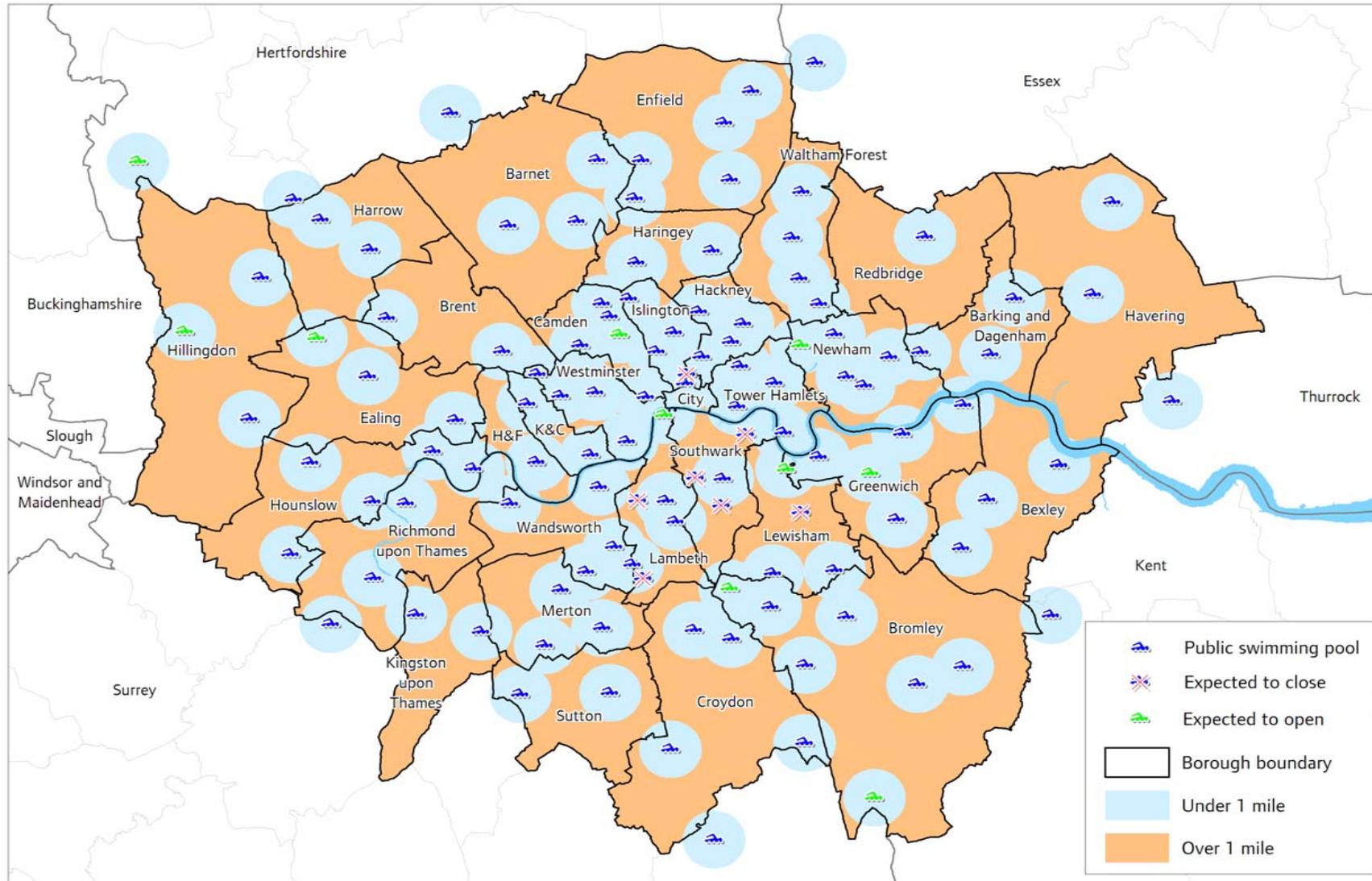


Figure 3 – A graph showing the estimated percentage of each London Borough’s population living more than 20 minutes walk (one mile) from a public swimming pool in 2008 and 2012

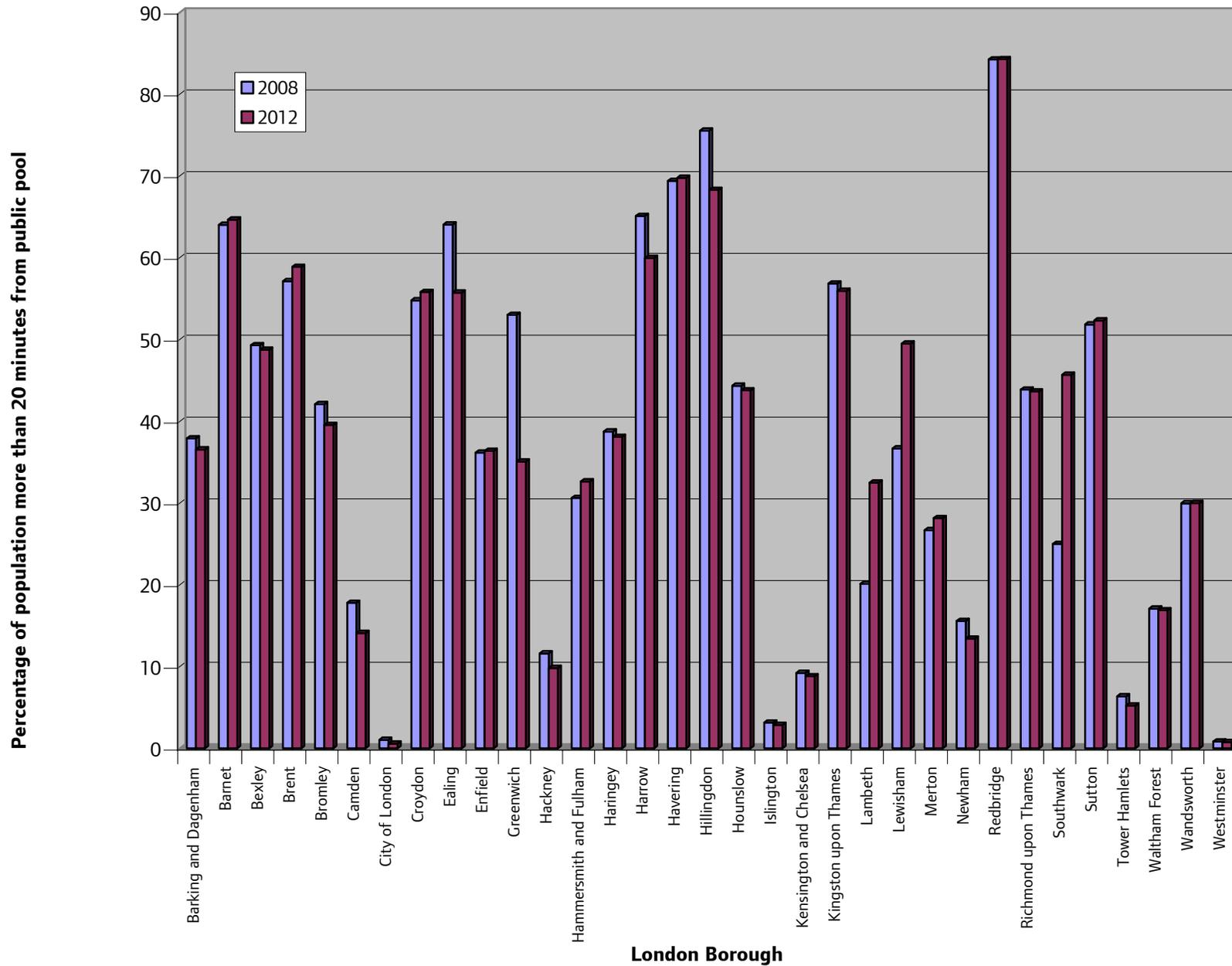
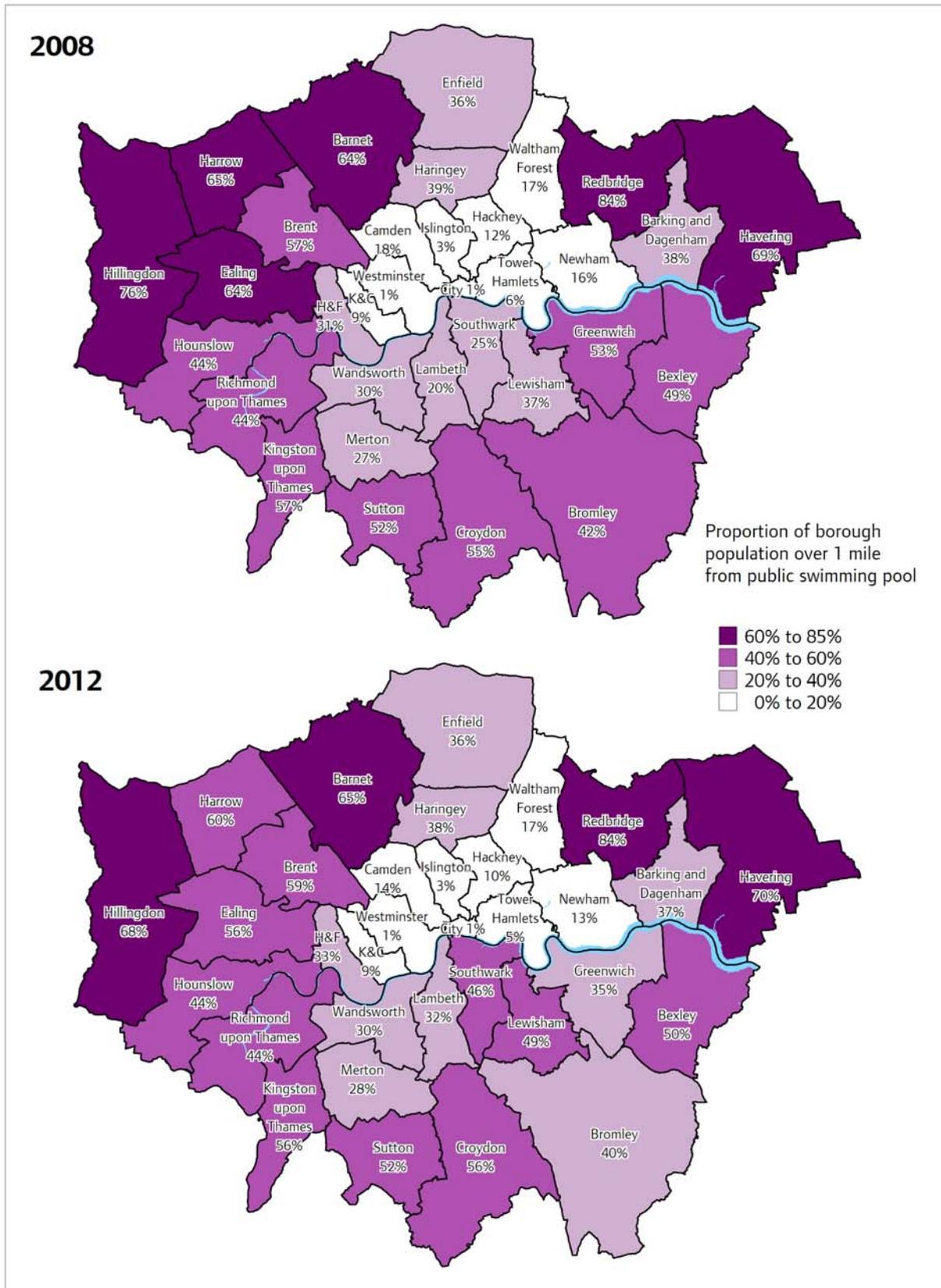


Figure 4 – Maps showing the estimated percentages of each London Borough’s population living more than 20 minutes walk (one mile) away from a public swimming pool in 2008 and 2012



Some Londoners who live more than 20 minutes walk from a public swimming pool also live in areas with low access to public transport

In places where Londoners live more than easy walking distance from a public swimming pool, access might not be an issue if there is good public transport. However, in some of the areas where Londoners live more than 20 minutes walk from a public pool, there is also low access to public transport e.g. in parts of the London Boroughs of Brent, Bromley, Croydon and Greenwich. The map at figure 5 shows the levels of access to public transport in the areas where Londoners currently live more than 20 minutes walk from a public swimming pool.⁷

Londoners could have limited opportunities to swim if public pools are frequently used for classes or other activities

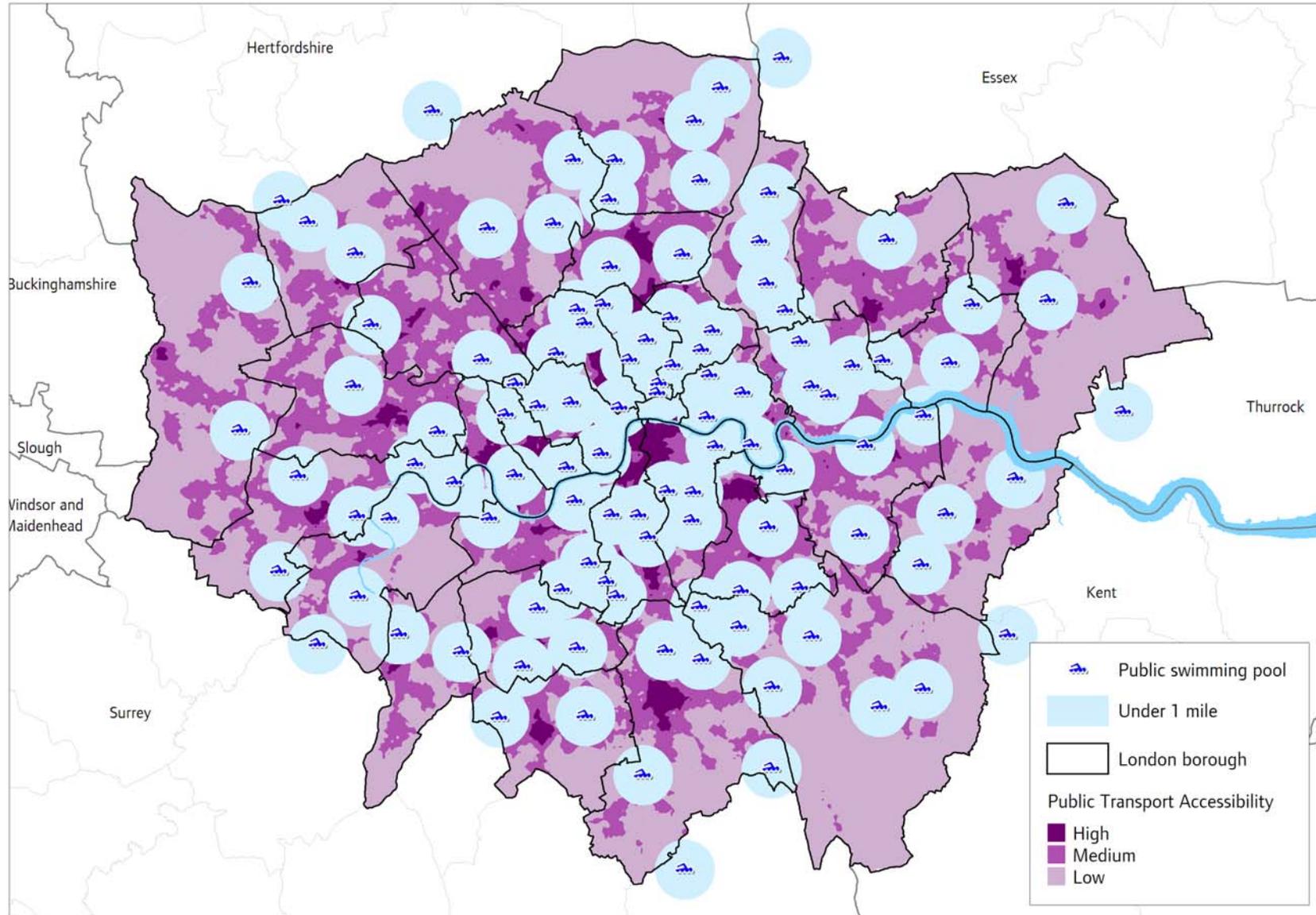
Londoners' opportunities to swim at public pools can also be limited if the pools are used for other activities e.g. school lessons. This may be a particular issue where there is only one pool at a site. In places where two pools are located, there is opportunity for greater flexibility with the possibility of one pool providing access for general swimming and the other being used for a school lesson. National research has shown that the most popular day for adults to swim is Monday and that they tend to prefer to swim in the evenings after 4pm.⁸ Further investigation into the extent to which public pools in London provide opportunities for general swimming at these times could be useful to help identify and remove possible barriers to people swimming, and this should form part of the on-going sporting legacy work.

In some areas without public pools, there is also low access to public transport e.g. in parts of the London Boroughs of Brent, Bromley, Croydon and Greenwich

⁷ The transport accessibility measure is based on Transport for London (TfL) 2006 Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) data

⁸ 'Business of Swimming', 2002, HNI International

Figure 5 – A map showing the levels of access to public transport in the areas where Londoners live more than 20 minutes (1 mile) from a public swimming pool



No region of London meets the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA)'s target for 13 metres² of public water space per 1,000 of the population

The Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) has a target of a minimum of 13 metres² of public water space per 1,000 population⁹ but no region of London meets this target. The deficit is greatest in east London where the amount of public water area is 38 per cent less than the target. The map at figure 7 shows the deficit for each region of London.

In order to meet the ASA's target, London would require a total of more than 93,236 metres² of public water space. It currently has around 70,150 metres², which is 25 per cent less than the target. This deficit is the equivalent of:

- Twenty-two 50 metre by 8 lane swimming pools with additional learner pool;
- Twenty-seven 50 metre by 8 lane swimming pools;
- Thirty-two 25 metre by 10 lane swimming pools with additional learner pool;
- Forty 25 metre by 8 lane swimming pools with additional learner pool; or
- Fifty-five 25 metre by 6 lane swimming pools with additional learner pool.¹⁰

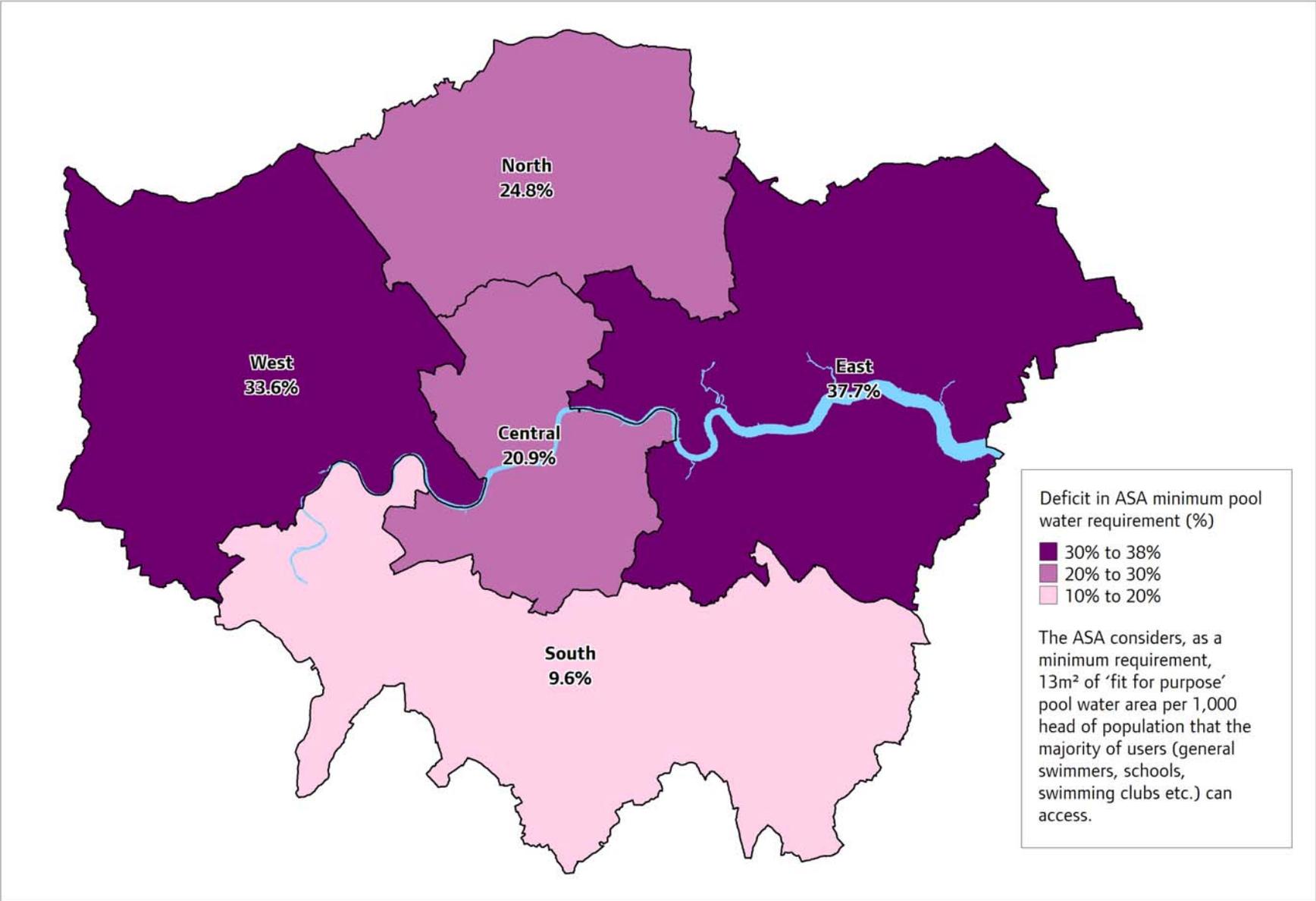
London Swimming is undertaking further work to identify the extent to which each individual London Borough meets the target of 13 metres² of public water space per 1,000 population. This will provide useful information to feed into the on-going sporting legacy work.

In order to meet the ASA target, London would require more than 93,236 metres² of public water space. It currently has around 70,150 metres² - 25 per cent less than the target

⁹ This Amateur Swimming Association target concerns water space that swimming clubs, schools and low-income users can access. The guideline of 13m² is based on providing a 25 metre by 5 lane swimming pool or a 25metre by 4 lane swimming pool with an additional learner pool that is 'fit for purpose' for a wide range of user activities for every 20,000 of the population

¹⁰ Amateur Swimming Association

Figure 6 – A map showing the percentage deficit in public water space for each region in London against the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA)'s target of 13 metres² of public water space per 1,000 population



Twenty-four London Boroughs do not have accessible diving facilities

There are 11 currently accessible diving facilities¹¹ in London located across 9 London Boroughs. This means 24 London Boroughs do not have accessible diving facilities and more than two-thirds of London's total population (73 per cent) lives outside of a borough with accessible diving facilities. The map at figure 7 shows the location of the currently accessible diving facilities in London.

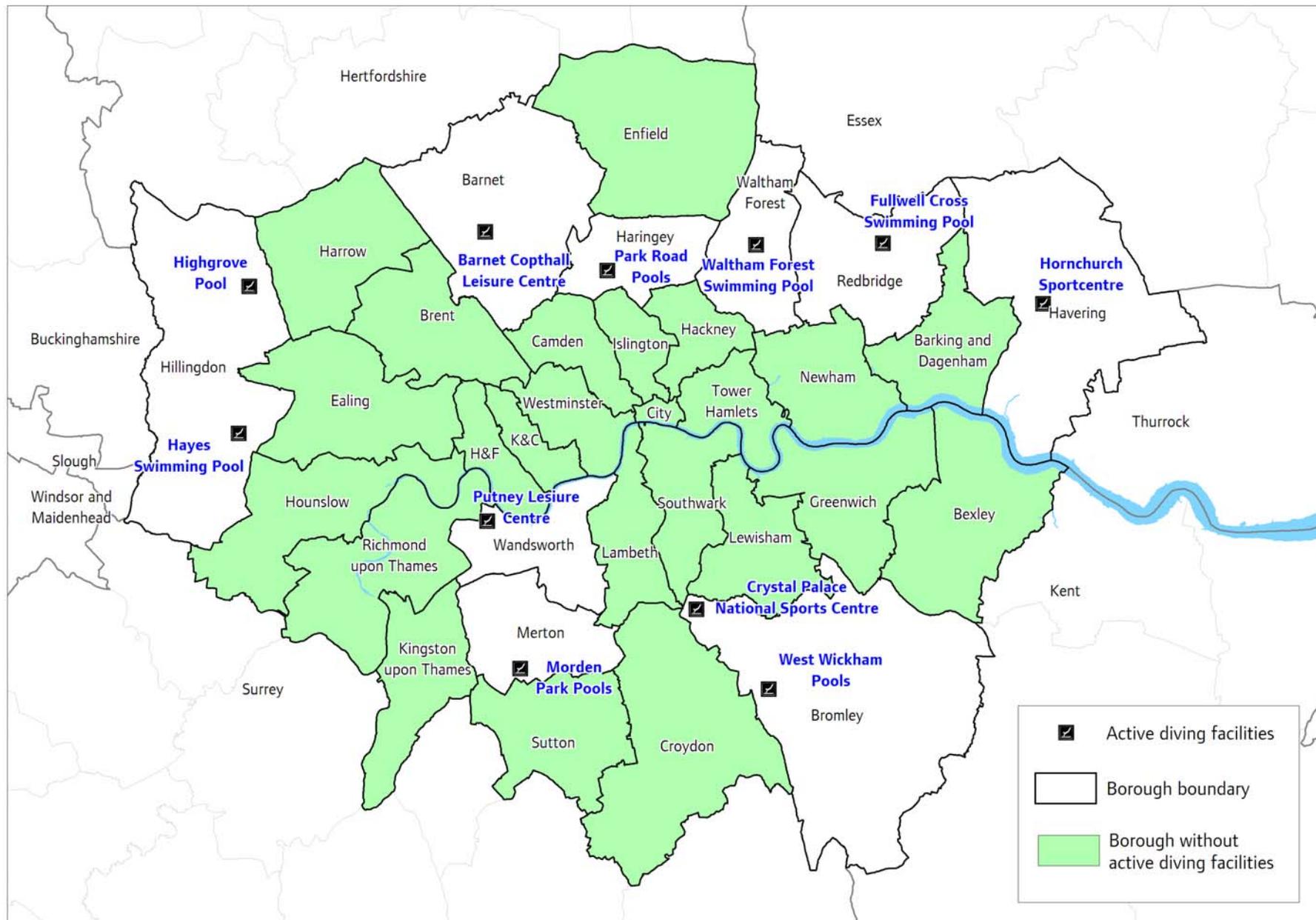
Ensuring sufficient competitive diving facilities across London has been raised as an important issue in relation to the 2012 sporting legacy. There may also be a wider issue about ensuring sufficient publicly accessible diving facilities in the capital.¹²

There are 11
currently
accessible diving
facilities in
London

¹¹ Diving facilities are defined as deep pools and diving boards. There are more than 11 such facilities in London but the extent to which these are available for use today varies

¹² In 2003 the Assembly heard from the Great British Diving Federation which suggested that publicly accessible diving facilities in the London area had declined by over 90 per cent in the last 30 years, with the number of the capital's swimming pools providing diving facilities falling from over 96 to under 10. Recently it has been suggested that the focus should not only be on providing diving facilities for high performance competitive clubs in London but also for the general population

Figure 7 – A map showing each currently accessible diving facility in London. London Boroughs without accessible diving facilities are shaded green.



Conclusion

The Committee's findings suggest that in 2008 London lacks a sufficient number of easily accessible public swimming pools and this situation is unlikely to improve by 2012. There is also a shortage of diving facilities in the capital.

Various actions have been suggested to help ensure better provision of easily accessible public swimming pools in London. These include:

- More swimming pools being built. London Swimming has suggested that in order to meet London's needs around six multi-use public pools needs to be built by 2012 which is considerably less than the 22 required.¹³ However, current constraints on public and private finances may limit the scope for many new pools.
- Re-opening recently closed pools and revisiting proposals for any planned closures. At the least, planned closures could be mitigated by the use of mobile or temporary pools. London Swimming has suggested these be used to maintain swimming provision when an existing pool is closed for refurbishment or renovation.¹⁴
- Old bathing ponds and lidos being brought back into use.
- Lidos being heated so they can be used all year round.
- More school swimming pools being opened to the public at weekends and during holiday times. However, there may be issues with the supply of school pools since some may disappear as a result of the Government's Building Schools for the Future programme.
- Increased use of mobile or temporary swimming pools.
- The seven temporary pools expected to be available after the 2012 Games being deployed as heated lidos across London.

Although many actions have been suggested before, there is now fresh impetus to ensure they happen because of the Mayor's London Legacy Plan for Sport. The Mayor's Commissioner of Sport has reported that the plan will be a blueprint for how London Boroughs, the voluntary and private sectors, school sports networks and the governing bodies of sport can work together¹⁵ to improve sports provision in the capital. This should include public swimming pools

Possible actions to ensure better provision of publicly accessible pools include opening more school pools outside of school hours and greater use of mobile or temporary swimming pools

¹³ This is based on meeting the ASA target of 13 metres of public water space per 1,000 population. Also see 'A strategy to get London Swimming 2008 to 2012+', London Swimming, page 32

¹⁴ 'A strategy to get London Swimming 2008 to 2012+', London Swimming, page 38

¹⁵ 'Act now to prevent the betrayal of the Games', The Evening Standard, 19 May 2008

and diving facilities in the capital, and the Committee's findings should form part of the evidence base for the plan. The findings should also help to inform where and what specific actions need to be taken to ensure sufficient public swimming pools and diving facilities across London for 2012 and beyond.

Appendix 1 Data and methodology

Data on number of public swimming pools in 2008 and 2012

The data on public swimming pools was obtained from Sport England on 14 August 2008. Sport England holds information on all swimming pools in London classified according to owning organisation type and status. For the purpose of this work 'public swimming pools' are defined as those directly owned by local authorities and only public pools with a status of 'operational' were included for 2008.

To estimate the likely public swimming pool stock for 2012 the following adjustments were made:

- removal from the analysis of all pools identified by London Swimming as likely to close or be under refurbishment after 2008; and
- inclusion of pools with a status of 'temporarily closed' in 2008

The calculation of population within walking distance in 2008 and 2012

The population analysis has been run for a walking distance of 1 mile as this is the estimated distance that can be walked in 20 minutes at an average speed of 3 miles per hour. The distances have been calculated on a straight line basis with the assumption that no barriers or impedances to walking (e.g. rivers, main roads) exist. The population has been calculated by selecting the public pools identified and using GIS techniques to buffer them by the selected distance.

The population figures for the map of current provision are 2006 Mid Year Population Estimates at Super Output Area level from the Office of National Statistics. The population figures used for the 2012 map are the 2007 round of GLA Population Projections PLP Low at Ward level produced by the GLA Data Management and Analysis Group.

The population that is not within 20 minutes of a public swimming pool has been estimated by overlaying each of the population polygons with the buffer areas. The population figure for each polygon is weighted according to what proportion of the polygon falls within the buffer distance. For example if 20 per cent of the area of a polygon with a population of 1000 people is not within the buffer distance from a pool then 200 people will be considered to be outside the walking distance. The methodology assumes that the population is spread evenly across the population polygon, which is not always

the case. However it gives a quick and fairly reasonable estimate of the population.

The table overleaf sets out the proportions of each London Borough's population within and outside of 20 minutes walk of a public pool.

Sources of other data

Transport for London (TfL)'s Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) data has been used in the maps showing access to public transport. London Swimming has provided the data on public diving facilities and also the data showing how far London regions meet the Amateur Swimming Association's target for public water space.

Details of the number of sites of public pools and the percentage of population within /outside of 20 minutes walk of a pool for each London Borough in 2008 and 2012

London Borough	2008				2012					
	Number of sites of public pools in operation	Population	Population within 20 mins of pool	Population outside 20 mins of pool	% of pop. outside 20 mins of pool	Number of sites of public pools in operation	Population	Population within 20 mins of pool	Population outside 20 mins of pool	% of pop. outside of 20 mins of pool
Barking and Dagenham	3	165,681	102,874	62,807	38	3	180,231	114,336	65,895	37
Barnet	3	328,562	118,207	210,355	64	3	345,574	122,151	223,423	65
Bexley	3	221,594	112,360	109,234	49	3	213,450	109,428	104,022	49
Brent	2	271,425	116,391	155,034	57	2	283,249	116,494	166,755	59
Bromley	6	299,135	173,225	125,910	42	8	300,036	181,363	118,673	40
Camden	4	227,453	186,990	40,463	18	5	206,280	177,194	29,086	14
City of London	2	7,760	7,680	80	1	2	10,856	10,794	62	1
Croydon	4	336,966	152,359	184,607	55	4	339,246	149,941	189,305	56
Ealing	2	306,376	110,159	196,217	64	3	322,481	142,762	179,718	56
Enfield	5	285,303	182,156	103,147	36	5	286,424	182,229	104,195	36
Greenwich	4	222,626	104,625	118,001	53	5	247,036	160,411	86,625	35
Hackney	4	208,350	184,149	24,201	12	4	225,720	203,566	22,154	10
Hammersmith and Fulham	1	171,410	118,933	52,477	31	1	183,724	123,761	59,963	33
Haringey	2	225,657	138,239	87,418	39	2	236,072	146,167	89,906	38
Harrow	2	214,573	74,871	139,702	65	2	215,788	86,410	129,378	60
Havering	2	227,340	69,600	157,740	69	2	231,315	69,954	161,361	70
Hillingdon	2	249,980	61,138	188,842	76	3	242,959	77,045	165,914	68
Hounslow	5	218,597	121,684	96,913	44	5	236,795	133,149	103,646	44
Islington	4	185,488	179,646	5,842	3	3	199,356	193,676	5,680	3
Kensington and Chelsea	2	178,021	161,618	16,403	9	2	170,332	155,351	14,982	9
Kingston upon Thames	2	155,917	67,291	88,626	57	2	155,956	68,718	87,239	56
Lambeth	4	271,950	217,220	54,730	20	3	292,314	197,343	94,971	32
Lewisham	3	255,652	161,915	93,737	37	3	269,102	135,901	133,201	49
Merton	3	197,727	144,994	52,733	27	3	194,163	139,515	54,648	28
Newham	4	248,383	209,691	38,692	16	5	294,690	255,168	39,522	13
Redbridge	1	251,942	39,704	212,238	84	1	258,176	40,600	217,576	84
Richmond upon Thames	2	179,509	100,780	78,729	44	2	184,902	104,205	80,696	44
Southwark	4	269,184	201,895	67,289	25	1	292,936	159,125	133,810	46
Sutton	2	184,435	88,829	95,606	52	2	181,534	86,554	94,980	52
Tower Hamlets	4	212,804	199,295	13,509	6	4	259,475	245,890	13,586	5
Waltham Forest	4	221,747	183,898	37,849	17	4	230,213	191,346	38,868	17
Wandsworth	5	278,951	195,379	83,572	30	5	296,104	207,292	88,812	30
Westminster	4	231,874	229,934	1,940	1	4	220,522	218,868	1,655	1
Inner London		2,972,937	2,392,583	580,354	20		3,157,485	2,430,095	727,389	23
Outer London		4,539,435	2,125,144	2,414,291	53		4,649,527	2,276,609	2,372,917	51
Total London		7,512,372	4,517,727	2,994,645	40		7,807,011	4,706,704	3,100,307	40

Appendix 2 Orders and translations

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Chinese

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Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

Greek

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Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে ফোন করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Arabic

الوصول على ملخص لهذا المستند بلغة،
فرجاء الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو الاتصال على
العنوان البريدي أو عنوان البريد
الالكتروني أعلاه.

Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતો હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઇ-મેઇલ સરનામા પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

Appendix 3 Principles of scrutiny

An aim for action

An Assembly scrutiny is not an end in itself. It aims for action to achieve improvement.

Independence

An Assembly scrutiny is conducted with objectivity; nothing should be done that could impair the independence of the process.

Holding the Mayor to account

The Assembly rigorously examines all aspects of the Mayor's strategies.

Inclusiveness

An Assembly scrutiny consults widely, having regard to issues of timeliness and cost.

Constructiveness

The Assembly conducts its scrutinies and investigations in a positive manner, recognising the need to work with stakeholders and the Mayor to achieve improvement.

Value for money

When conducting a scrutiny the Assembly is conscious of the need to spend public money effectively.

Greater London Authority

City Hall

The Queen's Walk

More London

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