

# CREATING OUR FUTURE



## SUMMARY OF GLL's CORPORATE PLAN 2023–2027

May 2025 Update

-  STRONGER VALUES DRIVEN RESULTS
-  STRONGER, HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES
-  INCREASED SOCIAL IMPACT
-  STRONGER REVENUES & BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

# GLL



# GLL





# OUR PURPOSE

TO IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND SOCIAL WELLBEING OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Established in 1993, GLL is a charitable social enterprise and workers cooperative. Over the last 30 years we've grown from a small leisure trust operating eight centres in Greenwich to the UK's largest leisure and cultural trust.

Under our customer facing brand Better, we operate 254 leisure centres, 115 libraries,

and 10 children's and play centres in partnership with over 60 local councils, public agencies and sporting organisations.

We welcome over 58 million visitors a year, generating over £465m in social value as we strive to help as many people as possible lead healthier, happier and longer lives.







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# 4 WELCOME



This brochure sets out our strategic ambitions for the period 2023 – 2027 through our corporate plan – Creating our Future.

## UPDATED VALUES

Our customer facing brand, Better, operates leisure, libraries and cultural services which will always be the core of what we do – but as we look forward, we'll be pushing the boundaries of our ambition and influence. The importance of sustainability as well as health and wellbeing is now integrated into our updated six core values and reflects our focus. We are taking steps to reduce our impact on the environment, including our first solar powered gym. Health and wellbeing development include national partnerships and local co-location with the NHS, and supporting cancer rehabilitation, pain management, weight management, and mental wellbeing. We are part of Family Hub and Start for Life initiatives and believe that strong families make for stable and happy communities. These are strong foundations that we intend to build on.

## DRIVING OUR PLAN

As a charitable social enterprise and a staff owned cooperative organisation, our values have always been important, and they are the driver for our plan. This

not only brings greater social cohesion to our ambitions, but it differentiates us from others. We know that being a successful business and a business for good are not mutually exclusive – they are mutually reinforcing! All our revenues go back into improving services and generating significant social value.

## BE PART OF OUR JOURNEY

We aim to provide you with a captivating and informative summary. It begins by introducing the background of GLL and our values, and then proceeds to outline the actions, developments, and innovations we are committed to delivering. These updates will be of great interest to our main stakeholders, including partners, customers, and staff, as well as potential stakeholders who share our passion for enhancing the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of local communities, thus making the UK a better place for all.

*Thank You.*

**Peter Bunday**  
Chief Executive

*“I am immensely proud of the strides we have taken to embrace the benefits of diversity in shaping company culture, decision making and effective governance, and therefore ensure that GLL stays innovative and forward thinking.”*



**Kulvinder Gainda**  
Company Secretary

2024 TOTAL SOCIAL VALUE  
**£465,000,000**

CREATING OUR FUTURE



*“Throughout our growth, we’ve always kept our social purpose at the heart of our business. In this way, we stay true to our values and many different customers.”*



Mark Sesnan OBE  
GLL Founder & Strategic Advisor



254   
Sports & Leisure Facilities

# THE GROWTH 5 OF A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

GLL has grown to become the UK’s largest service provider in the leisure, sport and library sectors.

GLL has continued to innovate and adapt to the changing needs to modernise and invest in public services. Today, we operate almost 400 venues that are high-standard, inclusive, accessible and resilient.

We have actively played our part in the emergence and success of the leisure and cultural trust operating model, as well as adding weight to a burgeoning social enterprise and cooperative sectors.

Providing employment opportunity, fair pay, sector-leading career development and apprenticeships – including within some of the UK’s most deprived communities – is something we and our partners can take pride in.

For over 30 years we have sought to challenge ‘the norm’ and to show how values-driven, social entrepreneurship can work effectively with government, health professionals, sport and library leaders.





CREATING OUR FUTURE

*“Our diverse and talented staff are key to the difference we make. I am personally delighted to be a part of the supportive corporate culture that sees strong levels of staff engagement across all levels and backgrounds.”*

Seya Charles  
Staff Society Engagement Manager

  
**11,000**  
Staff

  
**58,000,000**  
Customer Visits in 2024





*“As a staff owned charitable social enterprise we focus on investment in our people and offer the best learning and development opportunities in our sectors. We provide an inclusive and supportive environment, that nurtures personal growth and teamwork, and gives people the opportunity to thrive and develop their careers.”*

**Lorraine Patrinos**  
People Director





# 8 OUR VALUES

...AND WHAT WE STAND FOR!



## PARTNER OF CHOICE

We recognise that great performance must be a 'given' in all our partnerships, but it is the quality of our relationships where our difference really comes through, and our capability and willingness to support our partners' broader agendas.



## CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES AT OUR HEART

We are a strong business because we listen and act on customer feedback, engage our communities, and use insight and foresight to improve all we do.



## TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

We can play a key role in improving the health and wellbeing of all in our communities, including those facing economic, health and social inequality.





## RESPECTING THE PLANET

We are reducing our impact on the environment through actions such as less reliance on fossil fuels and minimising waste; and working closely on joint actions with our local authority partners.



## MORE THAN A JOB

We want to be the best staff owned organisation in the UK, where people feel valued and want to be actively involved in an organisation that is different.



## THE BETTER WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

We are a business for good and embrace the notion that we are a catalyst for change, and for improving the lives and opportunities for people in our communities.



# 10 OUR PARTNERS

You will find GLL in much of the UK, we work in partnership with local councils, public agencies and sporting organisations – from Belfast to Bromley, Carlisle to Cornwall, and Cardiff to Croydon. And we don't just run leisure centres, swimming pools, lidos and gyms – we provide for the whole community, running stadiums, libraries, theatres, children's centres, playgrounds, nurseries and so much more. We believe in partnership working and the benefits this brings, particularly when our values so closely align with those of our partners and their strategic priorities. We are proud to work with all of the Council, Local Authority, University and Government Agency partners listed below. Visit [better.org.uk](https://better.org.uk) to explore further.

- Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
- Bath & North East Somerset Council
- Bedford Borough Council
- Belfast City Council
- Bridgend County Borough Council
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Cambridge City Council
- Cardiff Council
- City of York Council
- Cornwall Council
- Cumberland Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- East Cambridgeshire District Council
- Eastbourne Borough Council
- Epsom & Ewell Borough Council
- Gateshead Council
- Greater London Authority
- Guildford Borough Council
- Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
- Lincolnshire County Council
- London Borough of Barking & Dagenham
- London Borough of Barnet
- London Borough of Brent
- London Borough of Bromley
- London Borough of Camden
- London Borough of Croydon
- London Borough of Ealing
- London Borough of Enfield
- London Borough of Hackney
- London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
- London Borough of Hillingdon
- London Borough of Hounslow
- London Borough of Islington
- London Borough of Lambeth
- London Borough of Lewisham
- London Borough of Newham
- London Borough of Merton
- London Borough of Sutton
- London Borough of Waltham Forest
- London Borough of Wandsworth
- London Legacy Development Corporation
- London Playing Fields Foundation
- Manchester City Council
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- Mole Valley District Council
- Newcastle City Council
- North Kesteven District Council
- Preston City Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
- Royal Borough of Greenwich
- Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
- Rugby Borough Council
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- Swindon Borough Council
- University of Manchester
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
- West Berkshire Council
- West Oxfordshire District Council
- Westminster Boating Base
- Westmorland & Furness Council
- Woking Borough Council





# INCREASED SOCIAL IMPACT 11

We know that not everyone has the same access to our facilities, products and services. We're focused on increasing our social impact and tackling health inequality by making sure we improve access, support diversity, remove barriers to participation, and provide choice for disadvantaged groups.

Measuring and learning what makes a difference is key to us and our partners and why we pioneered the development of social value measurement in both leisure and library services.

Social value is calculated by analysis of participation, frequency and socio-demographic data. This is evidenced across seven community measures and our results for 2024 are shown on this page.

Later in this document you will see we have set ambitious targets to grow our social value by delivering *Creating Our Future*.



Health Impact  
£77,000,000



Quality of Life  
£5,000,000



Subjective Wellbeing  
£273,000,000



Individual Development  
£1,500,000



Increased Educational  
Attainment  
£250,000



Reduced Medical  
Service Usage  
£1,000,000



Social & Community  
Development  
£73,000,000

Children's and  
Play Centres  
£34,000,000



## 2024 TOTAL SOCIAL VALUE

Total:

# £465,000,000

Leisure & Sport Facilities £332m

Libraries £99m

Children's and Play Centres £34m

## GLL SOCIAL VALUE =



£1 : £2

(For every £1 spent  
GLL generates £2  
in Social Value)

# £123

GLL SOCIAL VALUE  
PER CUSTOMER\*

\* Customers using 4x or  
more per month



# 12 OUR FOUNDATIONS

THE GLL SPORT FOUNDATION LEADS THE WAY FOR FURTHER FOUNDATIONS WE ARE CREATING

The GLL Sport Foundation has become one of the largest, independent, athlete-support schemes in the UK. Under our Patron Sally Gunnell, the Sport Foundation was established in 2008, to provide direct support to a growing number of talented athletes who were giving up on their sporting ambitions due to the unaffordable costs of competing, training and travel.

By providing a blend of financial bursaries, free access to training facilities, and medical and wellbeing services, the GLL Sport Foundation has now given over 28,000 awards to sporting talent and emerging talent across the UK. Although the majority of all awards are given to younger athletes, many have stayed with the Foundation for many years. As an indication of the level of talent supported, the Foundation has so far supported athletes winning a total of 162 Olympic and Paralympic Medals, as well as numerous world, European and Commonwealth medals.

## WE ARE CREATING TWO NEW FOUNDATIONS

The GLL Literary Foundation was launched in late 2024 to support authors to continue to write, share stories, and inspire young readers. As the largest public library operator in the UK, GLL recognises that we are uniquely positioned to support 'up and coming' children's authors by bridging the gap in author training and experience and provide children and young people with the opportunity to be inspired to read and write by seeing local authors succeed. Towards the end of this 5-year plan we will launch the GLL Futures Foundation, which will aim to transform lives through supporting national and community projects and campaigns that align with our purpose and values. We will update more on this nearer the time.

We are proud of the achievements of the GLL Sport Foundation and are confident that the GLL Literary Foundation will have the same impact. Adjacent you will see some further information including quotes from our patrons.



*“Sport is such an important part of all our lives and has the power to inspire young people to excel and harness their talent towards their future. From my own experience starting out as a young athlete and progressing through my sport, I understand how important the recognition and support from organisations like the GLL Sport Foundation can be to a young athlete. It can make the difference in achieving sporting ambitions.”*

Sally Gunnell OBE  
GLL Sport Foundation Patron







Operating for  
17 YEARS



28,000+  
Athlete Awards



Athletes Receive No  
Other Funding



Olympic & Paralympic  
Medals Won

£15,400,000

TOTAL SUPPORT VALUE



The GLL Literary Foundation's patron is former Children's Laureate, poet and author Joseph Coelho OBE. Joseph has a long-standing relationship with GLL libraries having grown up in Wandsworth, regularly using Roehampton library as a student and then working across the borough as a Saturday Library Assistant.

*“Becoming established as a children's author is extremely challenging, it takes so much more than just writing a fantastic book. This new Foundation will help authors promote their work and provide essential training and ongoing support.*

*Libraries are very close to my heart and have played an important role in my journey as an author. I'm therefore delighted to support the GLL Literary Foundation.”*

Joseph Coelho OBE  
GLL Literary Foundation Patron



Image features **Joseph** and  
**Rebecca Gediking**  
Head of Libraries



# 14 CORPORATE STRATEGY — CREATING OUR FUTURE

The last few years have seen an existential challenge for our business – firstly from Covid and then from the energy crisis and rapid inflation driven by geopolitical forces – all of which are beyond our control. Notwithstanding this, our business has emerged smarter, leaner and with a renewed focus on our core mission, our partners and our customers.

Our new plan showcases our values, ambition and future innovations. Partnering with cross-industry organisations and thought leaders, we aim to shape a progressive, resilient and inclusive future for leisure, libraries, culture, sport, health and public services.

We will maintain our position as a leader in the affordable leisure market, whilst growing customer numbers and loyalty across all our services. With enhancements to programmes and digital accessibility we will reposition our health and wellbeing offer by reducing barriers to participation and making values-driven changes across the business. A key focus will be promoting active lifestyles and health with specific new programmes focused on the themes of starting well – living well – ageing well.

As a charitable social enterprise, and a major co-operative business, we are committed to

acting responsibly and pursuing opportunities to solve societal and environmental challenges through enterprise, innovation and collaboration. So, over the course of the plan, we are building on the success of the GLL Sport Foundation (see page 11 for more details) with the launch two new foundations – the GLL Literary Foundation and the GLL Futures Foundation. We will also support existing and new social businesses through our new Accelerator and Incubator programmes. These developments will give us a further focus on the impact that our business makes in improving lives and the how we are contributing to broader economic, education, health, sustainability, and societal challenges.

Building on our rich heritage and using our six values as our strategic framework, we have set stretching ambitions to be achieved by 2027 – all through our customer brand Better. In creating our plan we have also been mindful of the contribution we can make with our partners towards achieving their own strategic aims and ambitions.

The next pages give a high level summary of what we intend to do by when, and what we aim to achieve.





# CREATING OUR FUTURE MEANS A STRONGER FUTURE!

Our plan is not just about the next 5 years; it will see us grow and extend our reach, and become a strong and sustainable company that will continue to be successful and relevant in the 21st century.



Stronger values  
driven results

Stronger  
environmental impact  
and outcomes

Stronger vision and  
identity to the sector  
and our partners

Stronger promotion  
of our values  
to our customers

Stronger, healthier  
communities

Stronger revenues and  
business performance

Stronger 'Team GLL' and  
people performance

Increased  
social impact



# 16 OUR ROUTE TO SUCCESS

Our high level ambitions are shown over the 5 years of the plan, and include innovations that are driven by and reinforce our values.

**2023**

Network of Health & Wellbeing Pilots  
GLL Innovation Campus  
Business Start-Up Hubs  
Real Living Wage Employer  
'Green Generation' Facilities

**2024**

New Health & Wellbeing Strategy and BETTER Flex Membership  
Partnership with NHS on 'Get Active', 'Every Mind Matters', and 'Be Body Aware' Campaigns  
New Library Strategy & GLL Literary Foundation Launched  
New Energy Procurement Partner and Procurement Strategy

**2025**

Improved Customer Digital Health Offer and Content  
Partnerships with NHS on 'Start For Life' Campaign and Health Literacy  
New Family & Junior Membership Options  
Social Enterprise Accelerator Programme Launched

**2026**

New National Health & Wellbeing Campaigns with the NHS  
Social Business Incubator Programme Launched  
New 'Career Promise' Launched  
GLL Futures Foundation Launched

**2027**

Blended Digital, Immersive and Physical Activity Programmes Offer on Main Products  
'Better Together' Partnership Programme on Aligning Partners' Strategic Priorities and GLL's Ambitions  
The 'Big Talk' Colleague Conversation – Sharing Insights, Ideas, Feedback  
Social Enterprise Education Partnerships Launched  
Roadmap to Carbon-Zero



# WHAT WE 17 WILL DELIVER

## EXPECTED RESULTS TO BE DELIVERED BY 2027

£2bn of social value

275m customer visits

1m people more active

Supporting 50% of our customers with subsidised pricing

500,000 people taught to swim

Digital options for all members and users

Energy use down 20%

Minimum 50% waste to recycling

Remain 100% owned by our staff as a cooperative society for community benefit

Social enterprise and social business support in all partnerships

GLL Foundations active in all partnerships

*“As a staff owned organisation, our governance arrangements benefit from having elected worker directors from all areas of our business. With our trustees and other board members, they have not only scrutinised this plan to ensure it is robust and fit for purpose, they have been actively involved in its development. Our Board fully supports the ambitious scale and scope of this plan and believe it sets our path to success in the years ahead.”*

Matt Perren  
GLL Chair





# 18 KEY TAKEAWAYS

Creating our future is more than a 5 Year Business Plan – it sets out the future we want to create for GLL



A leading operator of leisure and libraries in the UK and a trusted partner in delivering improvements in quality, sustainability and value in public services.



A respected champion and provider of services that promote healthy living, prevent health issues, and improve physical, mental, and social wellbeing.





An innovative and co-operative business that creates significant social value by aligning with national economic, environmental, health, and societal goals, while supporting our partners' local strategic ambitions.



A major employer, we are recognised as an outstanding values driven, inclusive, and involving staff-owned business providing good jobs and excellent career development.



A successful and sustainable charitable social enterprise reinvesting all financial surplus generated into fulfilling our purpose and mission and building a 100-year company.



**BY 2027, WE WANT TO BE THE UK'S MOST SUCCESSFUL AND INFLUENTIAL CHARITABLE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IN OUR SECTORS**



# Co-operatives build a better world

We are committed to building a fairer, more sustainable economy and are proud to celebrate the International Year of Co-operatives 2025.



#IYC2025

International Year  
of Cooperatives



**BETTER GLL** 2027  
CREATING  
OUR FUTURE

[better.org.uk](https://better.org.uk) / [gll.org](https://gll.org)

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Registered office: Middlegate House, The Royal Arsenal, London, SE18 6SX.  
Inland Revenue Charity no: XR43398 VAT registration no: 219749179.

