



WELLNESS FACILITY DESIGN AND PROJECT COORDINATION

The spa project planning pack

*A practical working document for
operators planning a new spa, refurbishment,
or wellness facility upgrade*

ALKALINE360.COM

INTRODUCTION

Why this pack exists

Most spa development projects either stall before they start, or run significantly over budget once they do. The cause is rarely lack of vision. The cause is almost always a lack of structured early-stage thinking.

The operators we work with at Alkaline 360 tend to arrive at a similar position. They have an idea for a new facility, a refurbishment, or a wellness upgrade. They have an approximate sense of the space available, the budget envelope, and the timeline. What they often don't have is a structured way of pressure-testing those assumptions before they commit serious time and money to the project.

This pack pulls together the working documents we would normally walk a client through in early scoping conversations. It is not a marketing brochure. It is a working document, designed to be used. Print it out, write in it, disagree with it, share it with your team, and bring it back to whoever is helping you scope the project.

There are five modules. Each one focuses on a different aspect of project readiness: layout and space planning, refurbishment readiness, design requirements, project structure, and stakeholder governance. They can be worked through in order, or you can dip into whichever section is most relevant to where you are right now.

A NOTE ON HOW ALKALINE 360 WORKS

Alkaline 360 is a design consultancy and project coordinator. We do not carry out construction, manufacturing, or installation directly. Instead, we coordinate a network of trusted architects, surveyors, principal contractors, and specialist suppliers, giving operators a single point of contact through a complex project.

Where this pack mentions "working with a design consultancy", that is what we mean. The decisions remain yours. The contract for physical works sits between you and your appointed contractor. Our role is to make sure those decisions are made with the right information, in the right order, and at the right time.

How to use this pack

This pack is structured into five working modules, plus a closing section on what to bring to a first conversation with a design consultancy.

There is no required order. If you already have a layout in mind and want to pressure-test your readiness, start with Module 2. If you are at the very beginning and trying to work out what is even possible in your space, start with Module 1. If you are pulling together a board paper, Module 5 is the section your CEO will want to see.

Approximate time per module

Module	Focus	Time
1. Layout and space planning	Sketching zones, allocating space, pressure-testing flow	60 to 90 mins
2. Refurbishment readiness	Working through 18 questions to test project readiness	45 to 60 mins
3. Design requirements	Reference content for changing rooms, treatment rooms, wet areas, back-of-house	Reference
4. Project planning summary	Bringing the pack together into a one-page project summary	30 mins
5. Stakeholders and governance	Mapping decision-makers, decision rights, communication, and risk	60 to 90 mins

Who in your team should be involved

Modules 1 to 4 work well as a solo exercise for whoever is leading the scoping. Module 5 is best worked through with the wider leadership team. If you can only get one person involved beyond yourself, make it the person who will be operationally responsible for the facility once it opens. Their input on Modules 1 and 5 is the most valuable.

Revisit it as plans evolve

This pack is not a one-shot exercise. The most useful approach is to complete it once at the start of your scoping process, then revisit it as you gather more information. Your answers will look different in three months.

01

SECTION ONE

Layout and space planning

The decisions you make about layout in the first three weeks of a project will shape every operational decision for the next ten years. Get them right early.

Layout and space planning

Layout is where most spa projects start, and it is also where most of them go wrong. The reason is straightforward. Layout decisions feel design-led, so they tend to be made in conversation with architects and interior designers, with the operational team consulted only at the end. By the time the operational team flags an issue, the layout has been signed off, the architect's fees are sunk, and the cost of changing direction is significant.

This module is designed to be worked through before you commission detailed design work. It will not give you a finished layout. What it will do is force you to make explicit decisions about zones, adjacencies, and flow, so that when you do commission design work, you arrive with a clear brief rather than a blank page.

1.1 The zoning grid

On the next page is a blank zoning grid. Use it to sketch the rough position of each major zone in your facility. The grid is deliberately not to scale. The point is not to draw an accurate plan. The point is to force you to make a decision about adjacencies.

Standard zones to map:

- Reception and arrival
- Changing rooms (separate male, female, and non-gendered if applicable)
- Wet areas (pool, hydrotherapy, vitality pool)
- Heat experiences (sauna, steam, hammam, snow room)
- Treatment rooms (single, double, couple's, specialist)
- Relaxation areas (post-treatment, post-thermal)
- Back-of-house (laundry, storage, staff areas, plant)
- Retail and refreshment (where applicable)

As you sketch, pay particular attention to three relationships: changing rooms to wet areas, treatment rooms to relaxation areas, and back-of-house to wet areas. Get those three right and most of the rest will follow.

Zoning grid

Sketch the rough position of each zone. Number them in the order a guest would encounter them.

NOTES ON ADJACENCIES

Now look at your sketch and answer three questions. The answers are often more useful than the sketch itself.

Which zones **MUST** be adjacent?

Direct connections without which the facility cannot work. For example, changing rooms must be adjacent to wet areas. A guest in a robe should not have to cross the building.

Which zones **MUST NOT** be adjacent?

Pairings that would compromise the guest experience or the operation. For example, treatment rooms next to a plant room.

Which adjacencies are most critical to get right?

The ones where getting it wrong would be expensive or operationally damaging to retrofit. Flag the two or three you most want to lock in early.

1.2 Zone-by-zone space allocation

For each zone you sketched, fill in your planned floor area. The directional minimums in the right-hand column are drawn from facilities we have helped design and deliver in the UK. They are starting points, not absolutes. If you are significantly below the minimum, that is a signal to either reduce the scope of the zone or find more space. Either decision is fine. Making the decision deliberately, and early, is what matters.

Zone	Your planned area (sqm)	Directional UK minimum
Reception and arrival		12 to 20 sqm
Changing rooms (per gender, including lockers, showers, WC)		25 to 40 sqm
Pool (per lane plus surround)		60 to 100 sqm
Hydrotherapy or vitality pool		20 to 35 sqm
Sauna (4 to 6 person)		8 to 12 sqm
Steam room (4 to 6 person)		8 to 12 sqm
Hammam suite		20 to 30 sqm
Single treatment room		13 to 16 sqm
Double treatment room		20 to 26 sqm
Relaxation area (per 8 to 10 guests)		30 to 50 sqm
Back-of-house (laundry, storage, staff)		15 to 25% of front-of-house

If you are working with a fixed total floor area, the most useful exercise is to add up your planned areas and compare them to the total available. If they exceed the total, you have a scope decision to make. If they fall well short, you may have under-planned the back-of-house, which is the single most common space-planning mistake we see.

1.3 Circulation and flow checklist

Tick the boxes you can answer with a confident yes. Any unticked boxes are areas to address before commissioning detailed design work.

- ☐ There is a clear, intuitive guest journey from arrival through to departure, with no need for staff direction at decision points
- ☐ Therapists can move between treatment rooms and back-of-house without crossing guest relaxation areas
- ☐ Clean linen and dirty linen routes do not cross at any point
- ☐ Wet-foot guests cannot reach reception or retail areas without first drying
- ☐ There is a clear acoustic separation between treatment rooms and any zones with active conversation (reception, café, changing rooms)
- ☐ Plant rooms are accessible to maintenance staff without entering guest areas
- ☐ Guests entering the spa from the hotel or club do not have to pass through the changing rooms of the opposite gender
- ☐ Emergency egress routes from wet areas comply with current building regulations and do not pass through other treatment areas
- ☐ Storage for treatment products, linen, and operational supplies is within easy reach of the zones where they are used
- ☐ There is a defined, signposted route for guests with reduced mobility from arrival through to every facility

Common layout mistakes to pressure-test against

- Under-provisioning back-of-house. The most common single mistake. If staff cannot do their jobs efficiently, guest experience suffers.
- Locating the pool view from reception. Visually impressive, operationally awkward. Wet-foot guests in reception areas create slip hazards and damage finishes.
- Forgetting the post-treatment relaxation route. Guests need somewhere to sit, drink water, and decompress before leaving. If they have to walk back through reception in a robe, the experience is broken.
- Single-aisle changing rooms at peak. A 25 sqm changing room serves 6 guests comfortably, 12 guests painfully, and 18 guests not at all.
- No dedicated couple's treatment room. Couples treatments are higher-margin and increasingly requested. Designing them in is much easier than retrofitting.

- Treating staff break space as an afterthought. Therapists work hard, often standing, often in heat. A proper break space is an operational necessity, not a luxury.

02

SECTION TWO

Refurbishment readiness

Eighteen questions that separate spa projects ready to start from spa projects that should wait.

The 18-question readiness checklist

This checklist is built around 18 questions we ask in early-stage scoping conversations with operators. They are not technical questions. They are not design questions. They are project readiness questions, and they are the questions that most reliably predict whether a project will run smoothly or run into difficulty.

Work through them honestly. There are no wrong answers, but there are signals. If you finish the section with more than five questions marked "not yet", you are at the discovery stage of your project. If you have three to five "not yet" answers, you are at the scoping stage. Fewer than three, and you are ready to commission design work.

Each question has a few lines of context, space for your notes, and a status box.

Strategic readiness

01 Can you state, in one sentence, why this project exists?

If you cannot, the project will struggle to survive its first significant setback. The one-sentence brief is what you return to when scope, budget, or timeline pressure mount.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

02 Have you defined what success looks like 12 months after opening?

Specific, measurable outcomes. Member retention, treatment room utilisation, ancillary spend, NPS, occupancy on weekday afternoons. Vague success criteria lead to vague projects.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

03 Have you confirmed who the facility is for?

Hotel guests, day spa visitors, members, residents, corporate clients, or some combination. The user profile drives every subsequent design decision.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

04 Have you researched how comparable facilities perform commercially?

Not aspirational competitors. Comparable ones. Same size, same market, same user profile. If you cannot name three, you have not done enough research.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

05 Is the project consistent with your wider commercial strategy?

A standalone wellness facility is a different proposition from one designed to drive hotel occupancy or member retention. Inconsistent positioning produces inconsistent results.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

06 Have you considered the implications of not doing this project?

Sometimes the right answer is to wait, refurbish later, or invest the capital elsewhere. A project is only worth doing if it is more valuable than the alternatives.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

Site and space readiness

07 Do you have accurate measurements of the existing space?

Not approximate, not historical, not the architect's drawings from 1998. Measured surveys, ideally undertaken in the last 12 months. Without them, every cost estimate is a guess.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

08 Do you understand the existing building's structural constraints?

Load-bearing walls, ceiling heights, services, drainage, ventilation. Wet rooms and heat experiences place specific demands on a building. Knowing what is feasible before you design saves costly redesign later.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

09 Have you considered the impact on the building's existing services?

A new thermal suite, pool, or treatment area will increase demand on heating, ventilation, water, and electrical supply. Understanding capacity headroom now prevents service upgrades emerging mid-project.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

10 Do you have a clear understanding of access constraints?

Plant equipment, large pieces of pre-fabricated stone or glass, and specialist heat experience modules can be too large for narrow access routes. We have seen projects where the only way to install a sauna was to crane it through a roof opening.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

Financial readiness

11 Do you have a directional budget range, agreed in writing, with the people who will sign it off?

Not a hopeful figure. A range, with a defined upper limit, that the relevant decision-makers have already accepted. Without it, every conversation that follows is a negotiation rather than a delivery.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

12 Have you built in contingency?

For a refurbishment, plan for 15 to 20 percent contingency above your base build cost. New-build projects can usually work with 10 to 12 percent. Projects that run with no contingency overrun. Projects that build it in, deliver.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

13 Do you understand the operational cost implications of the new facility?

Wet rooms and heat experiences are expensive to run. Energy, water, chemicals, ventilation, and specialist maintenance all add up. The capex decision is only half the financial picture.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

Timeline and operational readiness

14 Do you have a realistic understanding of how long the project will take?

From concept to opening, a major spa refurbishment typically takes 9 to 18 months. New-build wellness facilities usually take 12 to 24 months. Projects driven by unrealistic timelines either compromise on quality or miss the deadline. Both are expensive.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

15 Have you planned for the operational impact during construction?

If your facility will close partially or completely during the works, what happens to revenue, members, and staff? If it stays open, how do you manage noise, dust, and access?

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

16 Have you considered what will be needed to operationalise the facility once it opens?

New treatments require new training, new product, new pricing, and new marketing. The build is only the start. If the operational plan is not ready when the doors open, the launch underperforms.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

Stakeholder and decision readiness

17 Do you know who has final sign-off authority on each major decision?

Budget approval, design changes, supplier selection, and scope adjustments may have different decision-makers. Establishing this in writing now prevents project-paralysing disagreements later.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

18 Have you involved the operational team in the scoping?

The spa manager, head therapist, and front-of-house lead will live with the consequences of every layout and specification decision. Involving them now is faster, cheaper, and more accurate than involving them after handover.

Your notes

Status ☐ Ready ☐ Partially ready ☐ Not yet

Your readiness summary

Count your status responses across the 18 questions:

More than 5 "not yet" answers — Discovery stage

You are not yet ready to commission design work. The most useful next step is to address the unticked questions through internal conversations, market research, and operational consultation. Coming back to this checklist in two to three months will likely give you a much clearer picture. Designers and contractors brought in at this stage will end up doing scoping work that you should be doing yourself.

3 to 5 "not yet" answers — Scoping stage

You have a clear enough sense of the project to start gathering professional input, but you are not yet ready to commit to detailed design fees. This is the right point at which to have early conversations with a design consultancy. The goal of those conversations is to close out your remaining unknowns, not to commission deliverables.

Fewer than 3 "not yet" answers — Ready to commission

You are in good shape to brief a design consultancy and architect. Your clarity on strategic, financial, and operational readiness will translate directly into a faster, smoother, and more cost-effective design phase.

03

SECTION THREE

Design requirements quick reference

One-page reference cards for the four functional areas where most spa design decisions are made.

Design requirements quick reference

This module is a reference resource. Unlike the other modules, it is not a worksheet. It pulls together the key technical and operational considerations for the four functional areas where most spa design decisions get made: reception and changing rooms, treatment rooms, wet areas and thermal suites, and back-of-house.

The intent is that you can print these four pages out and refer to them during scoping conversations with architects, contractors, or internal stakeholders. They will not replace specialist input. They will help you ask better questions and recognise when something has been under-specified.

3.1 Reception and changing rooms

Typical space allocations

Reception: 12 to 20 sqm for a small to mid-sized spa. Add 4 to 8 sqm for retail display where applicable. Changing rooms: 25 to 40 sqm per gender for a facility serving 8 to 12 guests at peak. Larger facilities scale roughly linearly. Locker count should match peak occupancy plus 25 percent for changeover.

Climate and ventilation

Changing rooms are humid. They need positive ventilation that pulls moist air out, not air that recirculates. Damp changing rooms produce smell, finish damage, and negative reviews. Specify mechanical extract ventilation with humidity-triggered boost.

Peak capacity planning

The single most common changing room failure is sizing for average occupancy rather than peak. Peak in a hotel spa is typically 30 to 60 minutes after pool opening. Peak in a club spa is usually two narrow weekday windows. Plan for peak, not for average.

Material considerations

All changing room finishes should be water-resistant, slip-resistant where wet, and warm to the touch. Heated floors in changing rooms are a small capital cost for a significant guest experience uplift. Avoid fabrics on benches in wet changing areas.

Reception details that get under-specified

Adequate counter height for both seated and standing service. A clear sightline from reception to the changing room entrance. A defined route for guests collecting robes and slippers. Discreet storage for retail stock.

3.2 Treatment rooms

Standard sizes

Single treatment room: 13 to 16 sqm. Double room: 20 to 26 sqm. Couple's suite with private wet facilities: 26 to 35 sqm. Specialist rooms (Vichy shower, hammam table, Rasul) require additional space and specialist services.

Services required

Hot and cold water supply, drainage, dimmable lighting on a separate circuit from main lighting, sound isolation, individual climate control, and a robust acoustic seal at the door. Treatment rooms without acoustic separation cannot deliver a premium experience regardless of finish quality.

Flexibility considerations

Treatment menus change. Therapists move on. Equipment evolves. Designing rooms that can accommodate a couch, a Vichy shower, or a hydro bed without major reconfiguration is more useful than designing each room around its current single purpose.

Operational details that get under-specified

Lockable storage for product. A defined route for therapists to access product and linen between treatments. Acoustic isolation between adjacent rooms (most rooms fail on this). A waiting position outside each room that doesn't disturb the room next door.

The lighting problem

Treatment rooms need at least three lighting circuits: ambient (very low level, dimmable, warm tone), task (bright, neutral, for application of product and operational tasks), and emergency (compliant with regulations). A single dimmer on a single circuit is the most common lighting specification mistake we see.

3.3 Wet areas and thermal suites

Services and infrastructure

Wet areas place demands on a building that other zones do not. Drainage falls, waterproofing, ventilation, water treatment plant, heating, and electrical safety zones all need to be specified by people who specialise in wet area construction. Generalist contractors will under-specify these elements with predictable results.

Drainage

Floor drains should be linear, positioned to allow falls of at least 1:80 across the entire wet area, and connected to a drainage system sized for peak flow plus cleaning. Point drains in wet areas date the facility immediately and create cleaning problems.

Materials

Stone, large-format porcelain, and specialist tiling are appropriate. Avoid materials that cannot tolerate constant humidity, chlorine atmosphere, or thermal cycling. Sealants in wet areas have a defined lifespan and need to be in your maintenance schedule from day one.

Regulatory considerations

Public pools are governed by HSG179 (Health and Safety Executive guidance). Steam rooms, saunas, and hammams have specific electrical and ventilation requirements. Local authority building control will require sign-off on most wet area works. Engaging with building control early prevents late-stage redesign.

Plant room

The plant room serving a wet area is typically larger than operators expect. Filtration, heat exchangers, dosing, water storage, and ventilation plant collectively require 15 to 30 percent of the wet area's floor space, with appropriate access for maintenance.

3.4 Back-of-house and storage

What gets under-provisioned and why

Back-of-house space is the first thing cut when budgets tighten and the last thing operators advocate for. It is also the area whose under-provisioning damages day-to-day operation most. A spa with an undersized laundry, undersized product storage, and an undersized staff area will have higher staff turnover, worse hygiene compliance, and a degraded guest experience.

Laundry and linen

Towels, robes, and treatment linen require dedicated laundry space, ideally on-site for high-volume operations. Cost of off-site laundry over 5 years often exceeds the capital cost of an on-site facility. Either way, dirty linen routes must not cross clean linen routes.

Product storage

Treatment product needs cool, dry, secure storage with stock rotation visibility. Open shelving in a humid back area is not adequate. A dedicated stockroom with climate control is the standard.

Staff space

Therapists need a defined break space, away from guest areas, with seating, refreshment facilities, lockers, and adequate ventilation. Therapists working in heat for extended periods need a cool space to recover. This is an operational requirement, not a luxury.

Plant access

Maintenance contractors need to be able to access pool plant, ventilation plant, and electrical distribution without entering guest areas. If the only route to plant is through a guest changing room, maintenance becomes disruptive and slow.

Cleaning storage

Cleaning equipment, chemicals, and waste storage all need defined locations, with appropriate ventilation and security. Distributing this around the facility in cupboards is inefficient and creates compliance risks.

04

SECTION FOUR

Bringing it together

A one-page project summary template that consolidates the work you have done so far

MODULE 4

Project planning summary

This module is brief by design. Its purpose is to consolidate everything you have worked through in Modules 1 to 3 into a one-page project summary. That summary is the document you will share with internal stakeholders, return to when scope or budget pressure mounts, and bring to a first conversation with a design consultancy.

Fill in each field as concisely as possible. If a field requires more than two or three lines, you have not yet reduced the answer to its essence.

Project summary

Project name

Facility type

(new spa, refurbishment, wellness expansion, etc.)

Location

Total floor area available

One-sentence brief

Why does this project exist?

Primary user profile

Who is this facility for?

Indicative budget range

Range, not single figure. Note whether this includes contingency.

Target opening date

Including any immovable deadlines.

Decision-makers and authorities

Who signs off what, at what threshold.

Top three risks identified

Top three opportunities identified

Outstanding questions or unknowns

What still needs to be answered?

4.2 Typical project timeline

Below is a directional timeline for a major spa refurbishment in the UK. New-build wellness facilities typically extend the discovery and design phases. Smaller refurbishments may compress, but rarely below 6 months end-to-end. Use this as a sense check on your own project's timeline.

Phase	Typical duration	What happens
Discovery and feasibility	4 to 8 weeks	Strategic brief, market research, initial budget framing, surveyor and condition survey
Concept design	4 to 8 weeks	Feasibility plans, space planning, initial layouts, indicative cost framing
Detailed design	8 to 16 weeks	Architectural drawings, M&E coordination, FF&E specification, statutory submissions
Tender and contractor selection	4 to 8 weeks	Tender package issued, contractor responses evaluated, principal contractor appointed
Pre-construction	2 to 6 weeks	Mobilisation, programme finalisation, long-lead items ordered
Construction and fit-out	12 to 32 weeks	Strip-out, structural works, services, finishes, FF&E, commissioning
Pre-opening and snagging	2 to 4 weeks	Final commissioning, staff training, soft launch, snag list resolution
Total typical duration	9 to 18 months	End-to-end for a major spa refurbishment

These durations assume the project is well-scoped at the start. Projects that begin design work before the discovery phase is complete typically extend by 3 to 6 months. Projects that change scope mid-construction can extend by considerably more.

05

SECTION FIVE

Stakeholders and governance

Most spa projects don't fail because of design or budget. They fail because the right people weren't aligned at the right time.

Stakeholders and governance planning

Of all the modules in this pack, this is the one most often skipped by operators and most often referenced afterwards as the section that would have helped most. Spa projects fail for many reasons. The most common reason is not design, not budget, and not contractor performance. It is stakeholder misalignment, surfaced too late.

This module is structured around five working pages: stakeholder mapping, decision rights, communication planning, governance risk-spotting, and a closing readiness summary. Work through them with the wider leadership team rather than alone. The conversations that the worksheets prompt are at least as valuable as the answers you write down.

5.1 Stakeholder mapping

Map the people who will shape your project, organised into four groups. For each, capture their name, role, what they care about most, when they need to be involved, and any known concerns.

Decision-makers

People with formal sign-off authority on budget, design, supplier choice, or scope changes.

EXAMPLE: MD, Chair, Owner, Group Operations Director

Name	Role	What they care about	When involved	Known concerns

Influencers

People without sign-off authority but whose buy-in is essential to project success.

EXAMPLE: *Financial Controller, Head of Brand, Member committee chair*

Name	Role	What they care about	When involved	Known concerns

Operational input

People who will run the facility day-to-day and need input on functional design.

EXAMPLE: *Spa Manager, Therapy Team Lead, Front-of-House Manager, Head of Maintenance*

Name	Role	What they care about	When involved	Known concerns

External stakeholders

People outside your organisation whose input or approval is required.

EXAMPLE: *Local planning authority, neighbours, parent group, investors, members' association*

Name	Role	What they care about	When involved	Known concerns

Name	Role	What they care about	When involved	Known concerns

5.2 Decision rights

Tick the boxes you can answer with a confident yes. Each unticked box is an area where decisions during the project may stall, escalate unhelpfully, or be made by the wrong person.

- ☐ There is a written, agreed sign-off threshold for design changes (typically by cost or by impact)
- ☐ It is clear who can approve specification substitutions on site without escalation
- ☐ There is a defined escalation route for issues that cannot be resolved at the project team level
- ☐ The operational team has defined input rights on functional design, not just consultation
- ☐ Supplier selection criteria are documented before the tender process begins
- ☐ There is an agreed approach to handling change requests once design is signed off
- ☐ Decision-making during the construction phase is explicitly defined (does the same group still decide, or does authority transfer to the project manager?)
- ☐ There is a clear protocol for who can pause or stop work on site, and under what circumstances
- ☐ Quality and snagging sign-off authority is defined in advance of practical completion
- ☐ Post-completion decisions on operational launch readiness have an identified owner
- ☐ Budget contingency authority is defined (who decides when contingency is released, and on what basis?)
- ☐ There is a defined approach to legal and contract decisions during the project (e.g. principal contractor contract variations)

If you are looking at three or more unticked boxes, the most useful next step is a short workshop with your decision-makers, agenda focused entirely on agreeing decision rights in writing before any external work is commissioned.

5.3 Communication and reporting

Define how the project will be communicated through your organisation, and who hears what, when, and how. Use the prompts below to capture your plan.

Weekly project updates

Who needs them? In what format?

Monthly executive summary

Who receives it? What does it include?

Milestone announcements

Who is informed when key milestones are reached?

Issue or risk escalation

What's the protocol when something goes wrong?

Member, guest, or staff communications

Who owns external-facing communications during the project?

Marketing and PR communications

What gets shared publicly, and when?

Post-handover reporting

How is performance against the original brief reviewed once the facility opens?

5.4 Governance risk-spotting prompts

These prompts are drawn from the patterns we see most often in spa projects that run into difficulty. They are designed as honest provocations, not scaremongering. The point is to surface uncomfortable questions while there is still time to address them.

THE SINGLE POINT OF FAILURE

Is there one person whose departure or unavailability would significantly slow the project? What is the contingency?

THE UNSPOKEN DISAGREEMENT

Are there stakeholders who haven't openly disagreed with the project but quietly aren't supportive? What would they say if asked directly, in private, in the next 24 hours?

THE POST-COMPLETION HANDOVER GAP

Who is responsible for operationalising the facility once it opens — recruiting, training, marketing, opening day — and have they been involved in design decisions?

THE SCOPE CREEP ROUTE

Who is most likely to push for additions during the project, and what's the agreed process for evaluating and either approving or declining their requests?

THE FINANCIAL REPORTING GAP

Who in your organisation will be accountable for the project's commercial performance once it opens? Are they involved in scoping decisions now?

THE 'WE'LL FIGURE THAT OUT LATER' LIST

What decisions are you currently deferring? What is the latest realistic point at which each one needs to be made?

5.5 Governance readiness summary

You are in good governance shape when you can confidently tick all five of the following:

- ☐ Decision-makers and their authorities are documented in writing, not just understood verbally
- ☐ Operational stakeholders have defined input rights on functional design, not just consultation
- ☐ A communication and reporting cadence has been agreed before the project starts
- ☐ Risk and issue escalation routes are defined and known to everyone involved
- ☐ Post-completion accountability for the facility's commercial performance is clear and assigned

If you cannot tick all five

The single most useful intervention is a short, focused workshop with your senior team specifically on governance. Two hours, agenda based on this module, no other items. Most operators we work with describe this as the most valuable two hours they spent on the project.

CLOSING

What to bring to a first conversation with Alkaline

The most productive early-stage conversations happen when operators come prepared. You don't need finalised plans. Most clients we work with don't have them.

READY TO TALK?

Visit alkaline360.com/contact

CLOSING

What to bring to a first conversation with Alkaline

The most productive early-stage conversations tend to happen when operators come prepared. You don't need finalised plans. Most clients we work with don't have them when we first speak. But the more clarity you can offer on the six points below, the faster we can give you genuinely useful direction.

1. The space you're working with

Approximate square metres available, ceiling heights, and any existing services (drainage, ventilation, power supply). If you've got measured drawings, even basic ones, bring them. If not, photographs and rough sketches are fine.

2. The brief in one sentence

"We want to add a thermal suite for hotel guests." "We want to refurbish our existing wet area without closing for more than four weeks." "We want a flagship spa that drives membership in our country club." The clearer the one-sentence brief, the more focused the conversation.

3. Your indicative budget range

A directional figure is enough. Most operators are reluctant to share this early, but it is the single most important variable in scoping a realistic project. Without it, conversations drift into options that don't fit.

4. Your timeline

When does the facility need to open? Are there immovable dates (a hotel reopening, a membership launch, a planning deadline)? What's the latest realistic start date for design work?

5. Who needs to be involved in decisions

Is this an owner-led decision, or does it need board approval? Are there operational stakeholders whose input will shape the brief? Knowing this upfront helps us structure the right conversations early.

6. What you've already considered or ruled out

If you've already had quotes from contractors, looked at competitor facilities, or had internal discussions about specific features (a hammam, a snow room, a particular sauna manufacturer), tell us. It saves rehashing ground you've already covered.

If you've worked through this Planning Pack, you'll already have answers to most of these. Bring it with you.

Ready to talk?

Visit [**alkaline360.com/contact**](https://alkaline360.com/contact) to arrange a conversation.



ABOUT

About Alkaline 360

Alkaline 360 is a wellness facility design and project coordination consultancy. We work with hotel operators, spa directors, country clubs, leisure facility directors, and commercial fitness operators across the UK, helping them scope, design, and deliver wellness facility projects from initial concept through to a fully operational facility.

How we work

We act as a single point of contact through a complex project, coordinating a network of trusted architects, surveyors, principal contractors, and specialist suppliers. The contract for physical works sits between you and your appointed contractor. Our role is design consultancy and project coordination, making sure the right specialists are appointed, the right decisions are made in the right order, and the project delivers against the original brief.

What we cover

- Strategic feasibility and concept development
- Architectural design coordination through our appointed design team
- Surveying, condition assessment, and technical planning
- Specification and supplier coordination
- Contractor sourcing, evaluation, and tender support
- Project coordination through construction and pre-opening

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Wellness facility design and project coordination

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