

Urgent works for Plymouth Life Centre

Plymouth's Life Centre is to remain closed until April 2021, while urgent works are carried out inside the building.

The facility has been hugely popular with people of all ages since it opened in 2012, providing a wide range of sports and leisure activities, from elite diving and swimming to a splash pool for children, as well as a bowls rink, climbing wall, sports hall and fitness suite.

There have, however, been a number of issues requiring works over the last eight years, including ongoing water leaks in certain parts of the building. During the last few months further surveys and investigations by the Council and Balfour Beatty, who constructed the facility, have confirmed that major works are needed to rectify these issues.

The works will involve stripping the pool surround and changing areas back to the base concrete before relaying them with new waterproof layers. Consequential damage to walls, ceilings, fixtures and fittings, metalwork, plant and electrics will also need to be repaired.

The scale of these works means the centre will need to be temporarily closed until next April. Balfour Beatty have agreed that they will carry out these essential works at their own cost.

Deputy Council Leader, Peter Smith, said: "We're obviously very disappointed not to be able to reopen the Life Centre later this month. We know many people will have been looking forward to using the facilities again following lockdown restrictions.

"While the centre has been closed we've been able to do some more detailed investigation and survey work and the fact is we are looking at some issues that need to be sorted out as soon as possible.

"If we don't carry out these essential repairs the issues will just get worse and ultimately put the long-term future of the building at risk. We have a duty to the people of Plymouth to give them the first-class facility they deserve and one they can continue to enjoy for many years to come.

"We know the huge inconvenience this will cause, which is why we have explored all options to get the work done in the shortest possible timeframe. A partial closure – trying to keep restricted areas open around the works – would add significant time and cost to the programme and be an unpleasant, disruptive and noisy experience for centre users.

"We want to get in, get the work done and get the centre open again so that people can get back to the sports and activities they enjoy. While the building is closed we will be taking the opportunity to make some additional improvements and enhancements to make sure this eight-year-old building meets the needs of today's customers – including measures to make it fully

COVID-19 compliant. We hope that customers will see some really positive changes when the centre reopens.

“The closure will clearly impact on our aquatics programmes but both British Swimming and Swim England are supportive of the works, which will improve the facility for swimmers and divers and help to secure the future of these sports in Plymouth.”

Jack Buckner and Jane Nickerson, CEOs of British Swimming and Swim England, said: “As a regular host of British Swimming and Swim England events, the Plymouth Life Centre provides the stage for memorable moments for our athletes, coaches, support staff, supporters and all involved in aquatics sports. It is also the home of great swimming and diving clubs.

“We understand the impact that this closure will have on both the aquatics community of Plymouth and the general public who use the facilities and work in them – but we are sure the imminent improvements will help transform the Life Centre and provide positive, long-term benefits for the swimmers and divers who come through it.

“All at British Swimming and Swim England hope it is not long before exciting events like the British Diving Championships are taking place at the Life Centre once more, and we look forward to that time. In the meantime, both British Swimming and Swim England will work with Plymouth City Council to find ways to ensure diving and swimming continue to flourish in Plymouth.”

Matthew Ashwell, Commercial Director for Balfour Beatty’s UK Construction Services business, said: “We are working hard to plan and manage these works as efficiently and effectively as possible.

“We appreciate the patience of the public and the local community at this time and will continue to work in close collaboration with Plymouth City Council to ensure these works cause as little disruption as possible.”

David Greenwood, Regional Contract Manager at Everyone Active (who run the Life Centre) said: “While we are extremely disappointed about the closure of Plymouth Life Centre, we fully support the Council’s decision to carry out the essential remedial works so we can protect the long-term future of the centre.

“Our number one priority is our customers and colleagues so we are in communications with them directly and will continue to update them during the closure.”

Everyone Active will be reopening other facilities on the following dates:

Saturday 25 July

Brickfields Sports Centre (gym only)

Plympton Swimming Pool (gym only)

Saturday 1 August

Plympton Swimming Pool

Tinside Lido

Mount Wise Swimming Pools (main pool only)

The gym at Brickfields Sports Centre will be extended to accommodate more people, in line with social distancing, as well as increase the number of fitness stations for customers. The equipment is scheduled to be installed on Thursday 30 and Friday 31 July, therefore the gym will be closed during that period.

Further details of the works being carried out and alternative arrangements for centre users will be announced shortly and the Council will be working with its partners to signpost people to alternative provision.

Ends