

Newsletter

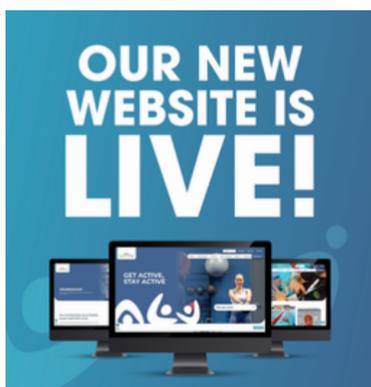
February 2026

A few words from the Chief Executive Officer

It's been another busy period at Plymouth Active and in this edition of the newsletter I'm delighted to say, it's main focus is on our people in our PAL communities and celebrates their success. PAL has a golden thread in all that we do that aims to ensure people live happier and healthier lives and our teams, our staff and our customers are at the heart of this. To learn of local, regional and national recognition on their achievements is something we are incredibly proud of. A huge congratulations to all who have achieved so much. This newsletter also reminds us of some of the impactful work that our teams have been doing and continue to do, work that I know is valued by those who attend the sessions.

We have also been able to announce a national first with Plymouth signing a memorandum of understanding with the national governing body Swim England. This will ensure that in Britain's Ocean City we are able to become an example of best practice nationally for all things aquatics. This will include strategic work including learn to swim, water safety, water sports, competitive swimming & diving and water-based careers, Plymouth will be firmly on the map as a city of excellence. There is so much to be positive about and being planned ahead this year, please keep a look out on our socials for things to get involved in. A big thank you as always to all of our staff and also to our customers who choose us, every one of you is appreciated.

Rhys Jones
CEO, Plymouth Active Leisure



Website and App Refresh!

We're excited to share that the Plymouth Active website and app have had a makeover. The updated design makes it easier than ever to explore our activities, book your favourite classes and check timetables on the go.

This refresh is just one part of our ongoing commitment to improve our services and help everyone stay active, keep moving and have fun with zero hassle. Take a look around the new site and see what's changed go to www.plymouthactive.co.uk

Welcome to the Team

Helen Hoskin

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Helen Hoskin as our new Head of Finance and People. Helen joins us from the Devon Chamber of Commerce, where she gained extensive experience working within a dynamic and fast-paced organisation.

Helen is looking forward to working closely with colleagues across all departments to support our strategic priorities and drive continued success.

"I'm really looking forward to working with such a committed team, Plymouth Active Leisure plays an important role in supporting health and wellbeing across the city, and I'm glad to be part of an organisation that helps people of all ages and backgrounds stay active."

We are delighted to welcome her to the team and wish her every success in her new role.



Tonia Couch

We are thrilled to welcome Olympian Tonia Couch to the team. Tonia brings world-class experience to our diving programme and will play a key role in coaching and inspiring the next generation of divers.

As a former Olympic athlete, Tonia has competed at the highest level of the sport, offering invaluable insight, technical expertise and first-hand knowledge of what it takes to succeed on the international stage. Her passion for diving and her commitment to athlete development make her an exceptional addition to our coaching team.

Tonia is eager to share her experience and help nurture the up-and-coming talent within our community. We are delighted to have her on board and look forward to the positive impact she will make.



Everyone Can Spin!



We are proud to share that hand bikes have now been introduced into our spin classes, opening the door for even more people to take part. These adaptive bikes allow participants with limited lower-body mobility or other accessibility needs to enjoy the full spin experience alongside everyone else.

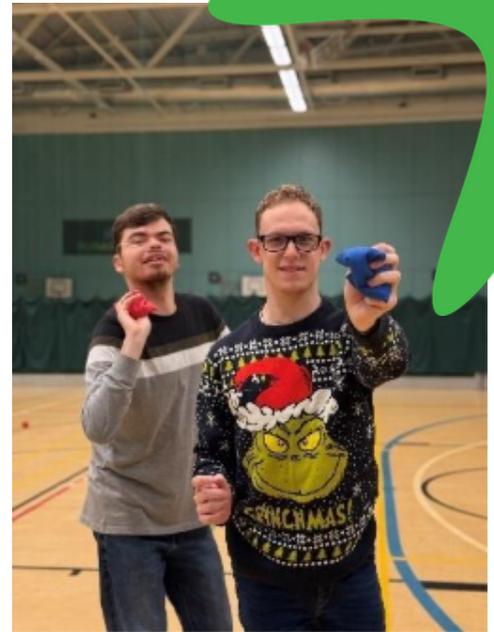
Our instructors have received training to support hand bike users, ensuring every session remains safe, effective and enjoyable for all. Early feedback has been fantastic, and we are excited to see more people getting involved and feeling the benefits.

Supporting Young People Through Inclusive Sport

The Active Lifestyles Team has been working in partnership with SEND schools across Plymouth to deliver a 30-week inclusive and adapted multi-sport programme for school-aged children with disabilities.

The project, funded by Sport England, has focused on increasing physical activity, boosting social wellbeing and building individual confidence. As part of the programme, 16 young people attended an Inclusive Activity Workshop to promote inclusive coaching skills, helping to create a supportive environment that will continue long after the sessions end.

Activities have been adapted to meet a wide range of needs, ensuring every child can take part in a way that works for them. With more than 550 attendances so far, the response has been fantastic and reflects the value of accessible, inclusive opportunities for young people across the city.



Awards Round Up

Sue Jennings

Sue Jennings, one of our long-standing volunteer ride leaders, was recently named a Volunteer of the Year finalist at YMCA Plymouth's Community Awards.

Since qualifying as a British Cycling Ride Leader in 2013, Sue has led more than 650 Breeze and Guided rides, supporting over 4,200 participants to get active on a bike. Now in her eighties, she continues to inspire women through cycling and values how riding keeps her physically fit and mentally strong.

Sue is an exceptional individual who truly deserves recognition for her remarkable dedication, commitment and the significant impact she has made through her volunteer work over the years.

Ashley Pickford

We are incredibly proud to share that Ashley won the Young Volunteer of the Year award at Active Devon's Volunteer Awards 2025.

Ashley is an exceptional young volunteer who brings energy, kindness and commitment to everything he does. Whether he is supporting our Adaptive Multisport sessions, refereeing football or championing the voices of young people across a range of local projects, Ashley always goes above and beyond to support others.

Through his actions, Ashley makes a meaningful and lasting difference in our community, inspiring his peers, elevating youth participation and encouraging more young people to get involved. This is a fantastic and well-deserved achievement.



Jakki Floyd

We're incredibly proud to celebrate Jakki, one of our outstanding HYNRG instructors, who has been named runner-up in the Physical Activity Hero Award category at ukactive's 2025 National Awards.

With more than 25 years of experience in the fitness industry, Jakki has dedicated her career to helping women move away from the pressures of the 'skinny' mindset and instead build lasting strength, confidence and power both inside and outside the gym.

She has transformed weightlifting from something intimidating into something inspiring, helping countless women discover abilities and confidence they didn't know they had.

Jakki's passion, expertise and unwavering commitment to helping others thrive make her a true role model and a deserving finalist in this national award category.



Alfie Cox

Alfie is one of our Supported Internship graduates working at the Plymouth Life Centre.

Through his work placement he has developed greater independence and confidence, particularly in public speaking. His dedication and progress have been outstanding, and we are incredibly proud to share that he has recently been awarded Health and Fitness Apprentice of the Year at City College's annual Apprentice of the Year Awards.



Cheryl Heckford

We are thrilled to share that Cheryl Heckford, one of our Finance and Admin Officers, has successfully completed her Level 3 Business and Administration apprenticeship, achieving an exceptional Distinction. This result reflects the consistent hard work, commitment, and professionalism Cheryl has shown throughout her apprenticeship journey.

Following her outstanding performance, Cheryl's tutor nominated her for the Advanced Business Apprentice of the Year 2026. We are incredibly proud to announce that Cheryl has been selected as the winner of this prestigious award.

This is a remarkable accomplishment and a well-deserved recognition of Cheryl's dedication, growth and contribution. She has done an amazing job, and the whole team couldn't be prouder.



Making Waves Nationally

We're delighted to have been named a runner-up at Swim England's National Awards for the Pioneering Pool Operator Award. This recognition reflects the incredible work taking place across Plymouth to make swimming accessible, inclusive and inspiring for everyone. Over the past year, we have:

- Introduced 1,254 people to new aquatic activities
- Supported 176 disadvantaged young people to learn to swim
- Improved water safety knowledge for more than 2,800 people
- Engaged 87% of schools across the city in our programmes
- Welcomed over 2,300 attendances to our youth night sessions at Tinside Lido, supporting 628 young people to take part in positive activity

A huge thank you to our amazing team, community and partners for helping us deliver accessible, inclusive and innovative swimming across Plymouth.



Gilly Ainslie

Gilly Ainslie has been awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) in the King's 2026 New Year Honours for her outstanding services to the community as a bowls coach.

Since the opening of Plymouth Life Centre in 2012, Gilly has been instrumental in developing the sport of bowls within the centre. Through her passion, expertise, and tireless commitment, she has:

- Introduced hundreds of people to the sport
- Championed inclusivity, ensuring bowls is welcoming and accessible to people of all ages and abilities
- Supported and developed talented athletes, many of whom have gone on to compete at the Commonwealth Games

We are incredibly proud of Gilly and delighted to see her achievements recognised at a national level.



Tinside Lido

We're thrilled to share that Tinside Lido has been commended by the Devon Tourism Awards in the International Tourism Award category.

This recognition reflects the hard work and passion that goes into maintaining our historic seaside pool and welcoming visitors from around the world. We are so proud to be part of Devon's vibrant tourism community and to showcase our beautiful coastline to an international audience.

As we look ahead to 2026, we're even more excited, with the completion of our regeneration project, Tinside Lido will be ready to dive into multiple fields of tourism and community engagement, offering even more for residents and visitors alike.



Fresh Foam for Safer Landings

Our dry dive pit has received a major refresh as we replaced the ageing foam blocks with 3,000 brand new, high quality blocks, bringing a welcome boost to safety, performance and training comfort for everyone who uses the facility.

The dry dive pit is an essential part of the diving pathway, allowing divers to practice new skills, refine technique and build confidence in a safe, controlled environment before taking their movements into the water. Over time, foam blocks naturally compress and lose their cushioning ability, so regular replacement is vital to ensure the pit continues to provide the impact absorbing support divers rely on.

This investment reflects our ongoing commitment to providing a high-quality training environment for divers of all levels, from those taking their first steps in the sport to athletes pushing their performance to new heights. We hope the refreshed pit helps them continue to progress, grow and achieve great things.

Our Disability Hub Club is Making Waves

Our Disability Hub Club, which meets weekly at the Life Centre, offers children with disabilities more than just swimming lessons, it provides a gateway to confidence, independence and inclusion.

Many participants start with little or no swimming experience, but through adapted lessons, patient guidance and supportive instruction they grow stronger in both skills and confidence. Each session is designed to empower children at their own pace, helping them feel safe, capable, and proud of what they achieve in the water.

After developing their water confidence, the children and their families were invited aboard an adapted boat with Horizons Sailing. For many, this was their first ever time at sea. It was a really hands-on experience where the children were able to learn about boat safety, explore navigation and even had the chance to take the helm and steer the boat. This unforgettable experience brought huge smiles, new achievements and an extra boost of confidence that will last a lifetime.



SEND Family Days

Over the last year we have delivered four SEND Family Fun Days, welcoming over 250 attendances from families across the city thanks to funding from Plymouth City Council's Short Breaks Service.

Designed for the whole family, each Fun Day offered a relaxed space where families could enjoy quality time together while taking part in inclusive, interactive activities. The sessions brought together families with shared lived experiences, creating a warm, non-judgemental environment where children could form new friendships and parents and carers could connect, chat, and support one another.

Across the four events, families took part in an exciting mix of activities from swimming and climbing to dodgeball and dance. Every session was thoughtfully adapted to ensure disabled children, their parents and carers, and non-disabled siblings could all participate side by side.



Together we're Taking Aquatics to the Next Level

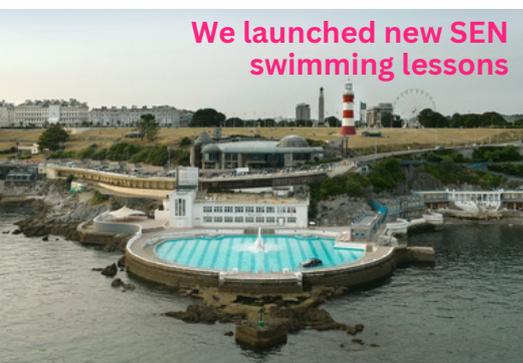
Plymouth Active Leisure is proud to announce a new collaboration with Swim England aimed at improving health, inclusivity and lifelong participation through aquatic activity. The partnership has been formalised through the signing of a memorandum of understanding, reflecting the shared strategic goals of both organisations.

By working together, Plymouth Active Leisure and Swim England will be able to create stronger, more impactful opportunities for communities across the city. The partnership will focus on increasing access to swimming and aquatic programmes, ensuring that people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities can enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of being active in the water.

A key part of the collaboration will centre on removing barriers to participation and strengthening pathways that support people from their first experience in the pool through to lifelong engagement in aquatic activity. Together, we are excited to shape a more active, healthy and inclusive future for everyone in Plymouth.



A Year in Aquatics 2025



We launched new SEN swimming lessons



Over 3,600 children swam weekly through our Learn to Swim programme



3 newly trained dive coaches



3 divers selected for Swim England's Junior Development Squad



70 squad divers



We delivered 185 free swim safe sessions



315 children dive with us weekly



2,870 children attended school swimming lessons



8 newly qualified swim teachers

Introducing HealthKey

Plymouth Active Leisure is partnering with HealthKey to offer customers access to an enhanced range of health and wellbeing services, covering everything from recovery and mental wellbeing to nutrition.

HealthKey is a digital platform designed to make wellbeing support more accessible, providing straightforward access to affordable, specialist health services all in one place. The offer includes support for physical health, mental health, lifestyle and recovery helping individuals take a more holistic approach to their wellbeing.

As part of this new partnership, customers who choose our premium membership will now receive FREE access to a comprehensive health and wellbeing package. This includes:

- 24/7 online GP services
- Therapy and counselling sessions
- Mental wellbeing support
- Nutrition guidance and recovery tools



This new benefit ensures our members have everything they need to get fit, stay fit and feel their best, both inside and outside our centres.

Up and Coming Events

- **Two Counties Spring Open Meet**
14 & 15 March
- **Pokemania**
21 March
- **Southwest Grapling**
28 March
- **The Devon Brazilian Jiu-jitsu Open**
9 May
- **Tinside Lido Opening Day**
23 May
- **Rise Up Cheerleading Festival**
13 June

Follow us on our social media channels:



Plymouth Active Leisure are working in partnership with Plymouth City Council to deliver its sports and leisure services.

Find out more at
plymouthactive.co.uk