

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

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Council secures financial boost for Fenland's leisure centres

Fenland District Council has successfully secured a grant from Sport England's National Leisure Recovery Fund to help support the re-opening of the district's four leisure centres.

The Council will use the £224,500 grant to continuing supporting its leisure partner, Freedom Leisure, in providing a full range of sports and leisure activities to visitors as soon as coronavirus restrictions are lifted.

The grant is part of a much broader package of significant financial support that the Council has provided Freedom Leisure since the beginning of the pandemic in March last year.

Cllr Sam Clark, Fenland District Council's Portfolio Holder for Leisure, said: "Leisure centres play an important role in the health and wellbeing of our residents, so the Council is extremely grateful that its application to the National Leisure Recovery Fund was successful.

"The Council-owned leisure centres are excellent, well-loved facilities and the Freedom Leisure teams that run them work incredibly hard to make sure people can access a fantastic range of sports and leisure activities.

"We are confident that the reopening of centres will be met with support from local residents and, as restrictions continue to ease throughout the year, the centres will be expected to run a full service as they did prior to the pandemic."

Cllr Chris Boden, Leader of Fenland District Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, added: "Like many industries, the leisure sector has been greatly impacted by the pandemic. Running costs did not stop when centres had to close and when they reopened with reduced hours in the summer, Covid safety measures resulted in significantly reduced capacity.

"This grant, in addition to the package of financial support provided by the Council, will help the centres to recover quickly following the lockdown, ensuring residents can return to enjoy the facilities as soon as it is possible."

Ivan Horsfall-Turner, Managing Director at Freedom Leisure, added: "The last year has been a significant challenge for the leisure industry and our role in providing the local communities across Fenland with access to health, fitness and wellbeing opportunities has never been more important. The funding secured with Fenland District Council will help us to reopen and get back to delivering a vital service to their residents and visitors."

Sport England's Chief Executive, Tim Hollingsworth, said: "Leisure facilities have a vital role to play in supporting the health of the nation and in particular in serving our more disadvantaged communities.

“They have been hit especially hard over the past year, so this investment is crucial and will help thousands to reopen when it becomes possible to do so – supporting the recovery and helping people get back to the activity they have badly missed.

“Sport England has worked at pace to enable the distribution of the investment to happen as quickly as possible and remains committed to doing what we can to continue to support this crucial part of our sector.”

Freedom Leisure runs four leisure centres on behalf of Fenland District Council, at Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech. For more information on the facilities, visit: www.freedom-leisure.co.uk

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For more information contact Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226