



freedomleisure
where you matter

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024



freedomleisure
where you matter



Foreword

Ivan Horsfall Turner
Chief Executive Officer

It is with great pride that I present the annual report for Freedom Leisure, a financial year that has been marked by resilience, growth and significant milestones. Our mission to improve lives through leisure has never been more important or more evident.

In recent years we have been presented with unprecedented challenges, yet it has also provided us with opportunities to innovate and adapt in ways that have strengthened our organisation and our service to the community. We have continued to invest in our facilities, programmes and our people, ensuring that we deliver high-quality leisure services that meet the evolving needs of our customers across England and Wales.

Our achievements this year include the successful onboarding of new partnerships, the implementation of new environmental projects and initiatives and the expansion of diverse and inclusive programmes that support vulnerable populations and cater to all age groups.

Financially, we have navigated the complexities of the current economic climate with prudence and astute financial planning that has enabled us to maintain stability whilst continuing to invest in the long-term future of our centres and the products and services we provide.

Looking ahead, we are inspired by the possibilities that lie before us. We are focused on further enhancing our services, embracing sustainable practices, strengthening our community partnerships, expanding our reach and promoting the physical, mental and social wellbeing of all our customers.

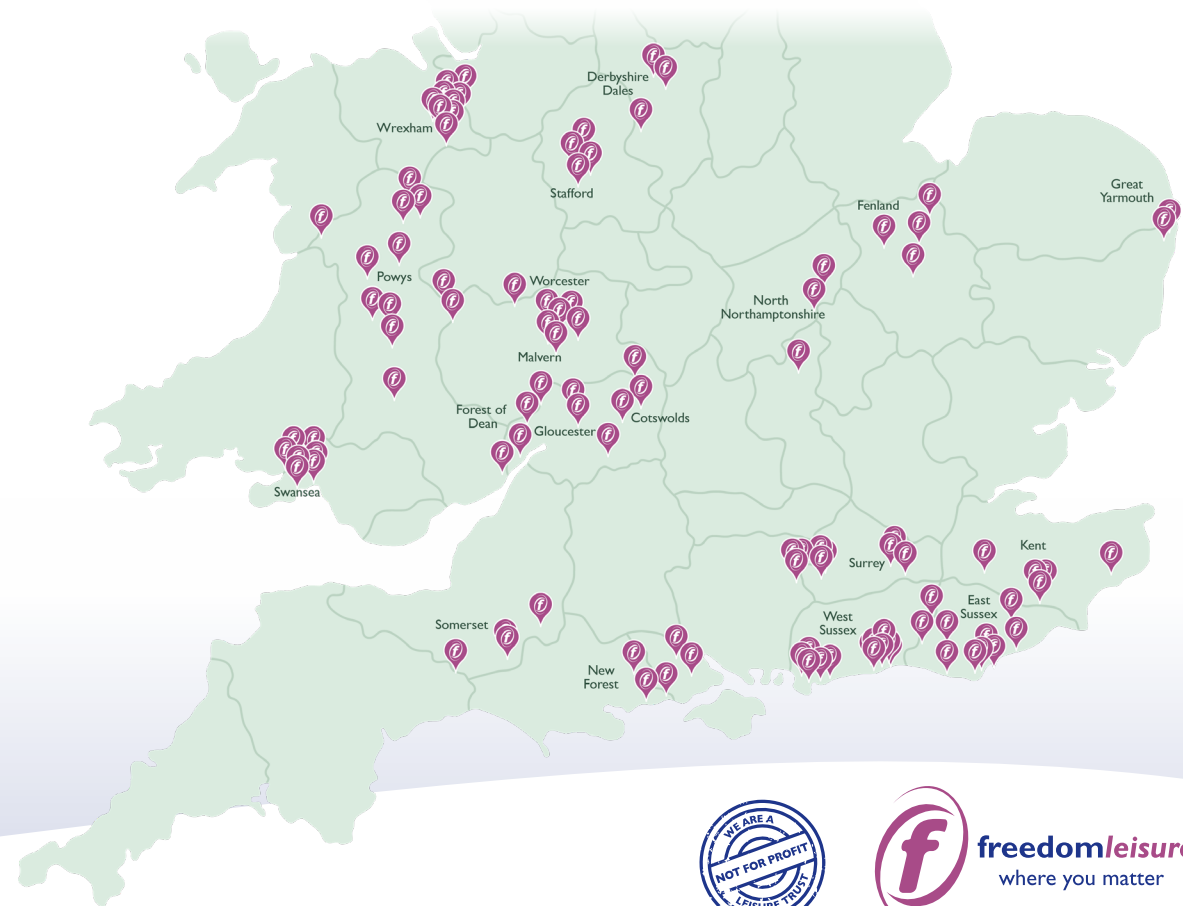
I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our dedicated colleagues, volunteers, partners and trustees. Your unwavering support and commitment are the foundation of our success.

In conclusion, I am confident that Freedom Leisure is well-positioned to face the future with optimism and determination as we approach 25 years of operating community leisure facilities on behalf of our partners. We remain steadfast in our mission to provide exceptional leisure services that enrich lives and strengthen communities.

Thank you for being a part of our journey.

We are proud of our partnerships

We're committed to working collaboratively with all our trusted partners to deliver an excellent leisure service that is vitally important for local communities and their social, physical, mental health and wellbeing.



Improving lives through leisure

We are one of the UK's leading not-for-profit charitable leisure and cultural trusts. We operate over 120 leisure, cultural and entertainment venues across the UK. Our mission is to 'improve lives through leisure'. We actively promote healthy lifestyles across the communities we serve. We provide high quality, affordable and accessible physical activity, mental health and social opportunities in local community facilities.

We are proud to be not-for-profit

Wealden Leisure Limited trading as Freedom Leisure is a genuine not for profit organisation with HMRC approved exempt charity status. We have no shareholders and as an exempt charity we re-invest all our surpluses back into the services we operate to provide our customers the best possible service we can.

Our achievements in numbers



22.5m visits in 2023/24
(7% increase from 2022/23)



Over 25 trusted partnerships with local authorities



£12.9m re-invested to improve services in place for local communities



60,000+ participants learning to swim



20 million kW of energy saved across our venues



Over 120 leisure, cultural and entertainment venues across the UK

We're not just a leisure trust, we're a force for positive social change



We care about our colleagues

At Freedom Leisure, we firmly believe in creating an employment environment that fosters personal learning and growth, with a strong sense of customer orientation and fun at the same time. Our business exists to help customers improve their lives through leisure; and our colleagues are absolutely fundamental to this.

Our mission is to give our colleagues opportunity – opportunity to develop new skills, opportunity to progress and develop levels of responsibility and opportunity to give their best at all times.

Fairness and equity are central to this mission; we recruit on positive attitude, as well as experience. We embrace individuality and differences of background and viewpoints and we encourage personalities to shine, for the benefit of our customers. We will always seek to open new opportunities to existing colleagues and support their development and growth through the organisation.

We actively seek our colleague's views and opinions on their working lives at Freedom Leisure, listen carefully and take action as appropriate to make their experience even more positive. Without doubt, our colleagues are our most valued asset.

An engaged workforce



1323 responses to our Survey



90% enjoyed their job



80% are proud to work for Freedom Leisure

Delivering a great service with a skilled and motivated team



Over 4000 colleagues completed on-line training



Nearly 600 colleagues completed First Aid training



70 colleagues enrolled in an Apprenticeship



We care about our communities

As a not-for-profit charitable leisure trust, supporting individuals and communities to be more active and healthier is at the heart of everything we do. We believe in health at all ages; we want the local communities we serve to have fun, feel included and welcome and empowered to live healthy lives.

We view our centres as 'wellness hubs'

Local communities can access an array of services to support them in taking greater control of their own health and wellbeing. We provide a Healthy Communities programme that provides people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to move more and be active!

We are committed to tackling health inequalities

Our team of Healthy Community specialists design tailored programmes that meet local population needs, removing barriers to participation and engaging everyone regardless of background, gender, age, ethnicity, ability, sexuality or socio-economic status.

Our services are inclusive, accessible and affordable

We believe in;

- Supporting people to be physically active in whatever way suits them
- Supporting individuals to prevent and manage health conditions
- Providing opportunities for positive experiences to support mental wellbeing
- Preventing social isolation, enabling local communities to come together



We operate a group wide exercise on referral programme across England and we are a trusted partner in Wales to deliver the National Exercise Referral Scheme.



We run condition specific programmes to support cardiac, stroke and cancer. We also support customers suffering other long-term health conditions such as Parkinson's, obesity, diabetes, MSK and many other conditions.



We developed links with Integrated Care Partnerships across England and Wales, with representation on many health collaboratives and a member of Community Leisure UK Health Forums.



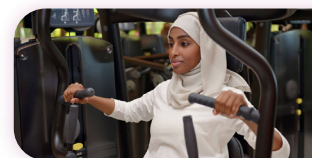
Social Prescribing referral opportunities exist in the majority of our partnerships, with new referral pathways being established with link workers and health professionals.



Across the year, we accessed Holiday and Food (HAF) funding & supported children to attend holiday programmes across our facilities. This vital initiative supports those in receipt for free school meals to access activity & healthy meals in the school holidays.



Our Forever Active programme is fully embedded across many partnerships with a range of activities and social opportunities aimed at those over the age of 65 including Walking Sports for both men and women in netball, football and cricket in partnership with Age UK.



We work with partners to provide free or subsidised access to refugee communities, including Ukrainian refugees and victims of modern slavery.



We have 60,000 participants in our Learn To Swim programme from babies to adults, supported by a team of highly skilled swimming instructors.



We care for our heritage & culture



Our heritage and cultural facilities in our Cotswold and Stafford partnerships provide opportunities for local communities and visitors to learn, explore, socialise and enjoy!

There have been a range of events run by teams in both Stafford and the Cotswolds. Events ranging from adult workshops, re-enactment events, evening lectures, afternoon talks and talks out in the community. We have also hosted a vast array of shows and performances from comedy to theatre productions, pantomimes to cinema.

Our venues offer more for children & adults within their communities

- We run a programme of educational events to engage families with school age children, included summer trails, learning quests and challenges and links to local schools to provide active learning opportunities.
- Community outreach ensures access to artifacts, handling items and costumes for those unable to visit in person. Visits to local care homes and Sight Loss Support Groups have been carried out this year.
- Young people and families engaged in interactive self-guided fun school holiday activities, trails and seasonal hunts and term-time educational site tours take large groups to explore castle, grounds and woodlands. Engaging with those from deprived backgrounds, to ensure the local community is embracing their locality.
- We utilise a highly trained volunteer community, with over 50 volunteers undertaking customer service and stewarding in our theatre, museums and galleries.



The Corinium Museum in Cirencester, managed by us on behalf of Cotswold District Council was awarded the accreditation of Visit England Quality Assured Visitor Attraction with a 91% rating.

We care about the environment

We are committed to promoting health and wellbeing in our communities while minimising our environmental footprint. Our commitment is reflected in our investment into energy efficiency projects in newer technologies and through the implementation of housekeeping best practices which reduces our energy demand and ensures that we use energy efficiently.

Our achievements in numbers



15% reduction
in electricity consumption



18% reduction
in gas consumption



5000 tonnes
reduction of carbon



30 centres generating
onsite electricity using solar PV



12 centres using power from Air Source Heat Pumps

Freedom Leisure continues to drive down emissions through the implementation of best practices and energy saving capital interventions to meet remaining energy demands.

We continue to prioritise our mindful approach to energy conservation and meeting the remaining demand through appropriate low and zero carbon technology.





‘Improving lives through leisure’



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