

Ground-breaking ceremony marks start of £600 million rejuvenation of University campuses

3 years ago



Construction is underway of the impressive extension to the Jubilee Sports Centre at the [University of Southampton](#), marking the start of wider improvements across the University's estate.

A ground-breaking ceremony for the centre officially began the University's £40 million investment in sports and wellbeing facilities.

The development is part of an ambitious programme of rejuvenation and refurbishment totalling £600 million, across the University's campuses, which will create the best education and studying facilities for students, enable world-class research to take place, and foster collaboration with businesses.

Professor Mark Smith, Vice Chancellor of the University was joined at the event by Dr Alan Whitehead MP, Casie Osborne, VP of Sports for the Students' Union, Sir James Wates, Chairman of Wates Group, and Richard Shroll, managing director of Wates Construction South.

The Jubilee Sports Centre, on the University's Highfield Campus, was named for the Diamond Jubilee of her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and is widely used by staff, students and the surrounding community including local schools who use the swimming pool.

The extension to the centre will include a modernised gym with 200 exercise stations, five new sports studios including dedicated martial arts and indoor cycling spaces, and a bouldering/climbing wall.

There will also be a reception area with toilets and cafe, as well as parking for e-scooters and bikes.

The building has been designed to be inclusive to all potential users, to connect to the outdoors, increase natural light, and to help meet the University's low carbon target. It will be built by Wates and is due to open in summer 2024.

Professor Mark Smith said:

Sport, fitness and wellbeing are incredibly important to our students, staff and our local community. Today's ceremony marks the start of an exciting chapter of our new sports building, and indeed, our long-term plans to improve other parts of our campuses.

Over the next five years we will be making significant investments in our buildings and infrastructure to ensure we are providing research and teaching facilities that enable our staff and students to continue to excel.

This significant investment is for the benefit of both the University and the city of Southampton. I would like to thank all those involved in months of planning of the Jubilee Sports Centre, and I am looking forward to watching the development take shape over the coming months."

Casie Osborne, Vice President Sports at the University of Southampton Students' Union, said:

In response to student demands, the University has made the right decision in choosing to invest in expanding and improving the sporting facilities in a way that is truly beneficial to students. It has been a privilege to be involved in the Jubilee development plans, and there has been a willingness by the team to listen to key topics students care about such as sustainability, accessibility, and increasing opportunities offered.

I am excited for when the Centre is completed as I know it will hugely enhance the student experience and is key to achieving our Sport Strategy goals to help more students live an active lifestyle."

Dr Alan Whitehead MP attended the University of Southampton in 1968 to study Politics and Philosophy. He was also President of the Student Union in 1971. He commented:

Sports and leisure facilities are vital to a community so as an MP and a university alumnus, I am delighted to attend this special event to mark what will be an important asset to this area of Southampton. This will be an impressive, state-of-the-art leisure facility, that will offer lots of opportunities to students, residents and young people to enjoy an active and healthy lifestyle.

Richard Shroll, managing director of Wates Construction South, said:

We've got extensive experience building new leisure facilities across the country and at each, we've seen the phenomenal impact investment has on the health and wellbeing of communities. The Jubilee Sports Centre represents the latest addition of modern, carefully designed facilities which prioritise sustainability to the University's portfolio, and we're proud to mark the next exciting phase in bringing the build to life."

Over the next five years, the University will be investing £600 million across its campuses to meet student demand, ensure student experience is of the highest standard and scientists and academics are carrying our research in state-of-the-art facilities.

Work will include removing buildings no longer fit for purpose, refurbishing existing buildings, improving

accommodation and enhancing open spaces.

The developments will help to support the University's goal to become carbon neutral by 2030 as work will not only be improvements to the estate, but will also consider travel, waste and recycling.

Plans for different phases of the development will be shared with the community accordingly and planning permission sought.