

New year start for Halton's leisure centre

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Work will soon get underway on site for Halton's exciting new leisure centre.

The striking, modern building on Moor Lane in Widnes will house swimming pools, a gym, sports hall, plus much more, and will replace Kingsway Leisure Centre which is now ageing and outdated.

The project had been delayed due to the pandemic and a Compulsory Purchase Order process which has now been resolved, allowing contractor **Wates Construction** to now prepare to start the build. Some mobilisation work will start in December, with the main work starting in the New Year, with completion expected towards the end of January 2025.

A reconfiguration of the original design has been completed to change the provision of heat and hot water from traditional gas-fired boilers to air source heat pumps, run on electricity. It is also intended that the new centre will be connected to the Solar Farm off Dundalk Road, allowing the centre to benefit from locally generated renewable power, helping to ensure the centre is as energy efficient as possible.

The leisure centre will feature a 25m x 6-lane swimming pool with a learner pool and seating for around 150 people, 100-station gym and a 4 court sports hall.

In addition, it will have both a spinning and exercise studio, squash court, complementary facilities, soft play area, health consultation rooms and a café/social space.

A Changing Places facility will be included, thus meeting the needs of those with profound and multiple learning disabilities as well as other disabilities that severely limit mobility and need assistance.

The two-storey building will provide a high quality, accessible and sustainable facility, which is vibrant and welcoming, capable of supporting sport, health and wellbeing, and offers inclusive services for all.

There would be car parking for more than 150 vehicles and, in keeping with the project's sustainability principles, five vehicle electric charging points with infrastructure to add up to 15 more.

It is anticipated the construction project will create 10 new construction jobs, along with 10 apprenticeship opportunities and 55 work experience placements.

Deputy Leader and portfolio holder for Major Projects, Cllr Dave Thompson, says: "I am pleased to be able to announce that work on the long-awaited new centre is going ahead and I very much look forward to its completion. The creation of this modern, attractive building on the Moor Lane site will enhance the area and bring extra activity and footfall and act as a catalyst for the future regeneration of the area."

Cllr Paul Nolan, the Council's portfolio holder for leisure services, says: "The centre will be inclusive for all, it will provide a modern mix of facilities tailored to our local community, and supports the Council's vision of helping more residents to participate in sport and physical activity, thus improving their long-term health and wellbeing. It will also be financially sustainable to operate long into the future."

Regional Managing Director for Wates Construction North, Dave Saville, says: "Leisure centres are integral to supporting the long-term wellbeing of a community and upgrading older facilities is essential to keeping them accessible for all. We've carefully designed Halton Leisure Centre to provide the best experience for end users, as well as prioritised sustainability and state-of-the-art technology, effectively futureproofing the hub for years to come. Now work is due to begin, we're focused on using the site to offer work and learning opportunities to the community and delivering the project to the high standard we pride ourselves on."