

Kingswood Active Leisure Centre is celebrating an astonishing six decades of being at the heart of the local community.

The centre has been encouraging healthy lifestyles over the years with a whole range of facilities designed to suit all ages and abilities. Since it opened in September 1961 as Soundwell Baths - the West Country's first post-war public indoor pool - it has seen literally hundreds of thousands of customers through the doors, many of them whole generations of the same family.

The running of the centre was taken over from South Gloucestershire Council by the not-for-profit organisation Circadian Trust in 2005. Today, a team of 50 operate the centre in Church Street Staple Hill, which, pre-Covid, saw well over half a million customers enjoying the facilities every year. It fully re-opened all its facilities to customers in July of this year.

Since taking over the centre, Circadian Trust has made considerable investment into the facilities including:

- 2010: a £2.6m facelift, in partnership with South Gloucestershire Council, which included a new gym, refurbished pool and viewing area and new reception area.
- 2012: a new softplay facility for its younger customers.
- 2020: a complete refurbishment of the pool's diving boards

In 2021, despite recent lockdowns, the centre achieved a 'Very Good' score from Sport England's leading national quality scheme for Sport and Leisure, Quest, for the role it plays in the local community. As well as sports and leisure facilities, the centre hosts a number of clubs and community groups including Choices 4 U, for people with learning difficulties.

One of the guests at next week's event will be Sue Green who has worked at the centre for the past 33 years, initially as a fitness instructor and now behind reception. **She says:** "Some people still refer to us as Soundwell Baths! Many things have changed – before we had computers everything was done with a pencil and paper, so there were quite a lot of double bookings because the pencil would fade so quickly. But what hasn't changed is the fact that we're like one big family, all the staff get on really well and our customers are just lovely. Many of them have been coming for years and are now bringing their grandchildren along."

Mark Crutchley, Circadian Trust Chief Executive, said: "Kingswood is the oldest facility we have in our portfolio of five centres across South Gloucestershire, but probably one of our most loved just because it has been a feature in the community for such a long time. It has really transformed over the years but remains very much part of the local area. We have customers who are bringing their children and grandchildren to the swimming lessons they attended as a child."

"We very much share in South Gloucestershire's vision for Kingswood to be a vibrant, resilient and inclusive place for people to live and work and look forward to being part of its future transformation and to continue to evolve our offering to meet the needs of our local community. Thank you to all our customers and staff who have supported us over the years!"

South Gloucestershire Council's Cabinet Member for Communities and Local Place Cllr Rachael Hunt said: "Congratulations to Kingswood Leisure Centre and the team behind it on their 60th anniversary! This local facility is a fantastic asset to the area and has helped so many of our residents enjoy exercise and stay active over the decades."

“We are currently engaging with the local community, businesses, and organisations such as Circadian Trust on a masterplan for Kingswood town centre. Kingswood has a bright future ahead and we want to ensure that it is accessible and attractive to all members of the community and offers a broad range of business, leisure, residential and community uses. The plan includes provision for a brand-new replacement leisure centre in the shopping centre and we are very excited about developing these plans in partnership with Circadian Trust recognising the vital role leisure has to play in community health and enjoyment.”

“Our masterplan consultation comes to a close at midnight on Sunday 10 October so please take part and have your say to help shape what Kingswood will be like 60 years from now.”

You can view the Kingswood Masterplan consultation materials and respond to the questionnaire online at <https://consultations.southglos.gov.uk/KingswoodMasterplan>