

Swimming becomes more accessible at Edinburgh Leisure with a new Poolpod

Edinburgh Leisure to make aquatic activity more accessible

Funding from Swim England has enabled Edinburgh Leisure's Royal Commonwealth Pool to install 'a Poolpod', a submersible lift, creating inclusive swimming environments for people with long-term health conditions, disabilities and rehabilitation needs.

The London Marathon Charitable Trust (LMCT) provided a £750,000 grant in 2020 to allow Swim England and its partners, the Activity Alliance, Community Leisure UK and GLL – to enhance swimming provisions at selected venues across the UK. The Royal Commonwealth Pool in Edinburgh is the only Scottish recipient, out of 20 sites across the UK, to receive the funding.

With one in five people in our population disabled or living with a long-term health condition, 'the Poolpod' gives dignified and independent access to the water for swimmers.

Lynne Bauba, Manager at Edinburgh Leisure explained: "The Poolpod was installed just before the lockdown in March 2020, and with the reduced capacity in our pool when we reopened due to the pandemic, we haven't been able to shout about the Poolpod until now.

"However, regular customers with long-term health conditions, disabilities and rehabilitation needs, have been delighted with this new facility."

One such customer, Alison Malcolm, who became paralysed from the waist down aged 50, explains how she has benefitted from using the new Poolpod and why she loves swimming.

“When I got back in the pool for the first time, my body confidence was low, and I was concerned I wouldn’t float. It sounds daft but after five months in bed, it took a long time for my body to reset. However, the staff were great about encouraging me to swim. I’ve never met a member of staff who didn’t want to help.

“Swimming is one of the most accessible ways for people with disabilities to incorporate physical activity into their lives. One of the things I like most about it is that once you’re in the water, you’re the same as everyone else. It has been a great way for me to get active again and using the Poolpod to get in and out of the pool has made the whole experience more enjoyable.

“Now I tend to swim 24 lengths at the Commie three mornings a week. I enjoy the 50m lengths because I can get in the zone and give myself a cardio workout without putting too much strain on my body.”

Edinburgh Leisure boasts 18 swimming pools across the city, including their stunning Victorian swimming baths and pools within the secondary schools. They offer a variety of pool-based activities to suit all abilities and while the Royal Commonwealth Pool is the only one to boast a Poolpod, most of them have hoists, which the leisure attendants are trained on, to assist people less able to access the pools.

Sir Rodney Walker, Chairperson of The London Marathon Charitable Trust, said: “The Trust funds work which challenges inequality of access to physical activity. We want to help create a society in which everyone is physically active, contributing to their health and wellbeing.

“We know that people who benefit most from aquatic activity –

including disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, older people, people with mobility issues and pregnant women – often face the biggest barriers to accessing a swimming pool.”

This exciting initiative is making swimming pools across the UK more accessible and ensuring a more inclusive customer experience for all.

The substantial grant from the LMCT has boosted Swim England’s Water Wellbeing model, which aims to help leisure centres remove barriers to accessing the water.

Water Wellbeing’s ‘whole facility’ approach encourages centres to understand and improve the customer experience, through a wide range of resources available on the Swim England website.

