

Fighting fit: pumped staff praise 'mint' new 24-7 gym

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Bristol Port's brand new Western Stevedores Gym has got the thumbs up from the first happy members to use the high-spec facility. Requests from the workforce for a gym were numerous when the Port launched its Wellbeing strategy last year to support staff in improving their mental and physical health during the pressures of COVID.



Ben Smith pictured above with just some of the team that helped make the gym a reality

The wellbeing programme is ongoing, and a small dedicated team have worked tirelessly to make the gym the jewel in its crown. The iconic but redundant Western Stevedores building has been restored, and fitted with a selection of equipment from treadmills, rowing machines, exercise bikes and multigyms to punchbags, kettle bells, squat rack, free weights and a bench press. It is open 24/7, free of charge to all staff.

One of the first gym users, Warehouse Operator Nick Hayward (above) was quick to praise it. "It looks mint!" he said.

Avonmouth Old Boys RFC followed up with a tweet saying "few of our boys will enjoy that perk". Dependent on popularity, plans for phase two of the gym include multiple studios for tutor-led classes such as yoga and pilates. The Port's PC Nik Weeks, a former personal trainer, leads a weekly HIIT class from the gym on Zoom, open to all staff.

The new gym was officially opened by local celebrity and marathon runner, Ben Smith. Known for running 401 marathons in 401 days, Ben, attracted international headlines for his incredible marathon feat back in 2016. Ben is currently training for his next fundraising event which he will start in May 2022, the USA Challenge. This will see him complete a marathon in every state capital and then cycle between them. He hopes to raise £500,000 for The 401 Foundation who support mental health and wellbeing in the local area and across the UK. Ben said "It is an honour to officially open Bristol Port's new gym, and I hope all the staff enjoy the benefits that exercise brings."

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