Paralympic heritage to be celebrated with £1million



The Queen and Dr Ludwig Guttman at the 1969 Stoke Mandeville Games WheelPower Sport

The National Paralympic Heritage Trust (NPHT) has been awarded £1million to make its dream of creating a heritage centre to celebrate the Paralympic movement a reality.

Launching on the same day as the World Para Athletics Championships 2017 in London, the project will see the first ever permanent exhibition built at Stoke Mandeville Stadium - the birthplace of the Paralympic movement.

Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: “Great Britain’s unique role in the development of the Paralympic movement and the inspirational success of ParalympicsGB will now be celebrated thanks to National Lottery players – wonderful news as we see the start of the World Para Athletics Championships this week.

"The British Paralympic Movement represents a key element of British disability history and we are delighted to see this project get off the ground to share that story as widely as possible.”

A nationwide programme of regional exhibitions starting in March 2018 will also be rolled out in Norwich, Manchester, Bradford, Bath, and London to share this unique story with new and wider audiences.

Birthplace of the British Paralympic movement

The five-year project will focus on the history of the development of the Paralympic movement from its founder, Dr Ludwig Guttmann, who organised the first Stoke Mandeville Games in 1948 through to stories of more recent Paralympic Games.

As director of the UK's first specialist unit for treating spinal injuries, Dr Guttmann believed that sport was a major method of therapy for injured military personnel by helping them build up physical strength and self-respect. He organised the first Stoke Mandeville Games for disabled persons on 28 July 1948 and his vision of an international games was realized in 1960 when the Paralympic Games were held in Rome following on from the Summer Olympics.

Touring exhibitions

The exhibitions will feature unique items capturing the history of the British Paralympic movement including Guttmann’s surgical box, medals from the first games and a wide range of equipment and memorabilia some of which had been at risk of being lost to the nation.

Collections and archives, which are currently scattered across the country, will be catalogued and digitised for the first time ensuring as many people as possible have the opportunity to access this unique and important resource.

Find out more

The four founding members of the NPHT are the British Paralympic Association, WheelPower Sport, Aylesbury Vale District Council, and Buckinghamshire County Council. Contributing partners include the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation, the National Spinal Injuries Unit, Buckinghamshire County Museum Trust and the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies.

Visit the National Paralympic Heritage Trust website.