

One of the exhibits at the Education and Heritage Centre Irish Football Association

If the 2018 FIFA World Cup has given you football fever, but your budget doesn't stretch to a trip to Russia, don't despair - there's a wealth of football heritage to be found much closer to home.

The Education and Heritage Centre at the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park tells the story of 130 years of Northern Irish football. Visitors can view artefacts and photographs to learn about the history of the game, the contribution of Northern Irish football to the international stage and even enjoy a guided behind-the-scenes stadium tour.

And now thanks to a £48,000 National Lottery grant this heritage is set to be shared with schools and community groups across Northern Ireland as part of the Irish Football Association Foundation's Football for All education and heritage project.

Volunteers have been at work designing a Heritage In A Box kit which will be used alongside an educational booklet to to bring Northern Ireland's proud footballing history to life in 40 local schools.

[quote=Paul Mullan, Head of HLF Northern Ireland]"Thanks to National Lottery players this project will show how sport can unite us all."[/quote]

Paul Mullan, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, said: "With the World Cup well under way there's never been a better time to learn more about the impact of people and players from Northern Ireland on the history and development of the

beautiful game. Thanks to National Lottery players this project will show how sport can unite us all and we are delighted to be involved in celebrating this legacy."

For more information about the project and the Education and Heritage Centre at the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park, visit the Irish Football Association site.

Northern Ireland footballing facts

- Did you know that the penalty kick originated in County Armagh? Its creation in 1890 is credited to Milford man William McCrum.
- The governing body, the Irish Football Association, was established in 1880, making it the fourth oldest national football association in the world.
- Norman Whiteside remains the youngest player to play in a World Cup. He was 17 years and 41 days old when he played at the 1982 World Cup in Spain. Pele had held the record before him.
- Joe Bambrick holds the record for the most goals scored by a British Isles player in an international match. His record of six goals in a 7-0 win against Wales back in February 1930 still stands today.
- Northern Ireland first qualified for the World Cup in 1958. Northern Ireland goalkeeper Harry Gregg was named goalkeeper of the tournament in Sweden.

Follow @IrishFATours on Twitter for more information, and share your experiences using the hashtag #heritageinabox.





Hirst Park in Ashington, Northumberland

Grass-roots football boost at World Cup legends' park