

Lottery boost for adventure centre plans

Ambitious plans to build a state-of-the-art scout hut and adventure centre in Topsham have received a boost this week.

The group behind the project to create the half a million pound Topsham Adventure Centre has been awarded a grant of £10,000 from the Big Lottery Fund, bringing their fundraising total to date to more than £100,000.

The project is a joint venture between the 1st Topsham Sea Scouts and Community, Equality, Disability and Action (CEDA) and is supported by The Mede who are a day centre for people living with Dementia and their carers. The groups will share the use of the building.

The new building will replace the recently demolished scout hut on the Recreation Ground which was believed to be pre-Second World War and began life as a mess hall at Exeter University. It was dismantled, transported across the city and rebuilt on Ferry Road in 1962. It was used by the scouts for more than 50 years, until it was damaged by floodwater in 2014.

Prior to this there was another hut at the Recreation Ground which housed Topsham Sea Scouts. The group was formed in 1909 – just two years after Baden-Powell held his first experimental scout camp on Brownsea Island which led to the formation of the Scout Movement.

Today Topsham Sea Scouts has around 70 members and are currently meeting in a polytunnel on a local farm while fundraising takes place for their new home.

Dr Nick Batchelor, chair of the trustees for Topsham Adventure Centre, said the condition of the hut had been deteriorating and the flood damage in 2014 made it unusable.

He added: 'Although secondhand, it had been a good home to the group. Its location has allowed easy access to the river where they can learn water safety skills and go out on various water craft.

'We wanted to create a building which offered a home for the Sea Scouts and facilities for CEDA and the Mede, as well a space that could be rented by local people which complements the other facilities in the area, rather than compete with them. Through the innovative design, we believe we are creating a unique space with identity and purpose.'

He added: 'We joined together to form a charity and raise funds for this new building. We are thrilled to receive this grant from the Big Lottery Fund.'

MCQUEENIE MULHOLLAND

As well as a permanent home for the Sea Scouts, the new building will be used as a day centre for young people with disabilities who are clients of CEDA, which has its headquarters on the edge of Exeter. It will also be available for the use of clients (and their carers) of The Mede, an organisation that provides respite for people living with dementia.

Dr Batchelor added: 'We believe this project will be of great benefit, encouraging local children to develop and challenge their physical, mental and social skills through a wide range of activities.'

'Our plan is to create a building which is both practical and attractive and reflects the heritage of the sea scouts, something which our architect has echoed in his innovative design of the roof of the building.'

The centre needs to have a high roof to enable the scouts to practice rigging a sailing dinghy. It has been designed with a roof that represents the masts of a ship, to reflect the history and the environment of Topsham and the sea scouts.

Ends

Monday June 4, 2018

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