



Bright new era for Bishop Auckland

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Bishop Auckland Table Tennis Club celebrated World Table Tennis Day by opening their newly refurbished centre with Sandra Deaton, Chair of Table Tennis England officially doing the honours.

Whilst the club has only been running since July 2012 it was successful with a Table Tennis England facilities bid, as well as securing funding from the local councils, trusts and private donations from members of the community, meaning it was able to undergo a huge renovation.

The hall before the project started was a 1960 sports hall with original paintwork, poor acoustics and a carpeted floor, which was far from ideal for table tennis and very uninspiring for users.

The initial project aim was to provide a dividing curtain and Taraflex flooring throughout the training floor, however the matched funding from the local community was so successful that the project was increased to include fresh paintwork, acoustic panelling and a new entrance and access ramp, improving the training environment for the 150 players who access the facility.

The total project came in at more than £26,000 with the funding covering £24,000.

When opening the centre, Sandra Deaton also unveiled a new plaque dedicating the hall to Bob Porter from Chesterfield. Bob spent more than 20 years coaching table tennis, patiently feeding the balls to anyone and everyone who wanted to give table tennis a go through his many hours of coaching each week.

Such players to come through Bob's coaching include England No 1 Liam Pitchford and former Junior internationals Sean Cullen and Daniel Lowe. Bob's willingness to play with everyone and anyone inspired a new generation of players and coaches – a true gent of the sport, this facility recognises his legacy.



Inside the hall

"The new facility is fantastic," said Matthew Porter, club chairman. "The hall allows us to continue to offer table tennis to everyone in the community in an inspiring and motivating facility. This work shows the youngsters both in the club and in the community that we want to invest in them and their future and inspire them to become the next champions."

Local councillor Sam Zair said: "To support sports clubs like this one is very important to me. I am quite happy that Cllr Joy Allen and myself have been able to put joint funding in for this project.

"This is a great way to be active and it also helps tackle things like obesity. Matthew Porter and his team are doing marvellous things. It is a lot of hard work and they are really making a difference."

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