

Investment is the perfect therapy!

Based in Hereford since 1978, the Royal National College for the Blind (RNC) is a specialist residential provider of teaching, training and supported employment for learners with visual impairment.

Around 200 learners come from all over the country and abroad to study there each year, the youngest learners are aged 16-19, with adult learners up to retirement age.

As part of a major investment in a new £21 million facility, the Rural Regeneration Zone provided £1 million to support the scheme.

The investment by the Zone will help the college build on its work in supporting blind and partially sighted people learn skills which can then lead to employment thereby improving economic inclusion in Herefordshire and across the Zone.

Combined with some of the other investments being made in the city - such as the ESG Herefordshire scheme and the Learning Village - it is clear Hereford has a very bright future

The new state-of-the-art Venns Lane Centre includes teaching and training gyms, indoor and outdoor sports pitches, and a complementary therapy training and treatment suite with hydrotherapy facilities.

RNC has been nominated by the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) to host the 2010 World Blind Football Championships, and with the College's facilities nominated along with other sporting providers in the county as an available pre-2012 Games Training Camp, RNC will be playing an exciting part in bringing the Paralympics to Herefordshire.

Christine Steadman, RNC's CEO/Principal, said: "This fantastic grant from the Rural Regeneration Zone makes a big difference to our redevelopment project, and in particular will allow RNC to provide some outstanding facilities for our learners to train for careers in the Complementary Therapy industry.

"It is essential that our learners train in real work environments to ensure they have the best opportunities for securing employment, and here learners can work closely with those on sport and fitness programmes as well as provide a high quality service to Centre users and visiting teams."

Ian Edwards, Advantage West Midlands Partnership Team Leader, said: "The Royal National College for the Blind plays a massive role in not only supporting skills and economic inclusion, but is responsible for raising the profile of Hereford and the West Midlands.

"The investment in the new sports and complementary therapy facilities enables the college to progress with the work and go on to host some very important events and teams in years to come.

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Craig Scott and Nicola Watson, complementary therapy learners; Shirley Evans, RNC Director of Business, Enterprise and Development; Ian Edwards, Advantage West Midlands Partnerships Team Leader and guide dog Ripley.

