

*Embargoed until 24<sup>th</sup> Oct 2018*

## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

### **Buckinghamshire selected to support the Rotary's World Polio Day celebrations**

To mark World Polio Day on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Rotary groups across Great Britain and Ireland will be raising awareness for the fight to eradicate the disease by planting 2.5 million purple crocus corms nationwide.

25,000 of these purple crocus flowers are to be planted at the home of wheelchair sports charity, [WheelPower](http://www.wheelpower.org.uk) at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, in Buckinghamshire today from 2pm – 5:30pm.

Founder of WheelPower and Stoke Mandeville Stadium Professor Sir Ludwig Guttmann first pioneered the rehabilitation of patients who suffered from paralysis as a result of contracting polio in the 1940's and was himself a member of Rotary.

The eradication of polio is one of Rotary's longest standing and most significant humanitarian commitments.

Rotary's efforts, along with their global partners, have led to the immunisation of more than 2.5 billion children against the disease since pledging to eradicate it over 30 years ago. As a result, the number of cases worldwide has reduced by 99.9%, with the number of polio endemic countries falling from 125 to just three; Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria.

2017 saw just 22 cases of the disease, the lowest in history, making a polio-free world closer than ever.

Today in Buckinghamshire, up to 50 volunteers from Rotary, local schools, and community groups are set to plant 11 bulbs per second next to the athletics track at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, which are expected to bloom into a beautiful carpet of purple from late February/early March 2019.

So why purple? Rotary's Purple4Polio campaign, which was launched in 2016, aims to ensure that no child in the world goes unimmunised against polio, and to symbolise that a child has had the immunisation, they receive a 'purple pinkie' – purple dye placed on their little finger fingernail.

*Transforming lives through sport*

WheelPower, Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Guttmann Road, Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire, HP21 9PP  
Tel: 01296 395995 Email: [info@wheelpower.org.uk](mailto:info@wheelpower.org.uk) [www.wheelpower.org.uk](http://www.wheelpower.org.uk)

Debbie Hodge, President of Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland and Trustee for WheelPower, explains why Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Buckinghamshire, has been picked as one of the sites to raise awareness of the fight against polio: “The legacy of polio is post-polio syndrome. Rotary and WheelPower working together can give polio survivors the opportunity to live healthy lives through sport and exercise. It is important that we remind the public that the fight for a polio-free world has not yet been won, but we will end polio.”

Martin McElhatton, Chief Executive for WheelPower added, “Our national partnership with Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland aims to help young and newly disabled people play sport and be active. Rotary helps WheelPower to promote our work and by planting 20,000 crocus bulbs at our home at Stoke Mandeville Stadium we can go some way to promote Rotary’s amazing goal to eradicate Polio. Every spring Stoke Mandeville Stadium will be bedecked in purple and hopefully the world will be closer to being polio free.”

For more information or to arrange an interview or visit please contact:

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## Notes to Editor:

### What is Polio?

Polio is a paralysing and potentially fatal infectious disease. There is no cure, but there are safe and effective vaccines. Polio can be prevented through immunisation. Polio vaccine, given multiple times, almost always protects a child for life. The strategy to eradicate polio is therefore based on preventing infection by immunising every child until transmission stops and the world is polio-free.

### Who are Rotary?

Rotary International is one of the world's largest membership and humanitarian service organisations. It brings together 1.2 million members worldwide, with around 45,000 of those based in Great Britain and Ireland. Rotary members volunteer their time and talents to make a difference to tackle significant humanitarian challenges at home and abroad in our cause areas:

- Promoting Peace
- Fighting Disease
- Providing Clean Water
- Supporting Education
- Saving Mothers and Children
- Growing Local Economies

### About Rotary district 1260

Rotary district 1260 covers the counties of Beds, Herts and Bucks.

Click [here](#) to find out more.

### About WheelPower

WheelPower have been providing opportunities in sport for people with physical impairments for nearly 70 years.

Based in Stoke Mandeville, the home of the Paralympic movement, WheelPower is at the heart of wheelchair sport.

From first-timers to Paralympic medallists, WheelPower support and promote participation at all levels. We have seen how playing sport can enrich lives, offering tremendous physical and psychological benefits, whatever your age or ability.

*Transforming lives through sport*

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Each year, WheelPower supports over 100,000 disabled people to participate in sport and activity across the country.

Join us in this mission as a participant, supporter or volunteer and together we can help transform lives through sport.

### About Pushing Forward

Pushing Forward is WheelPower's Strategic Plan for the period between 2017 and 2021 and aims to move the organisation forward building on its heritage, traditions and people to provide opportunities which will enable more disabled people to lead healthy and active lives.

Pushing Forward will deliver our Mission to 'Transform Lives Through Sport' and is based on our core values as an open, inspiring, forward looking and innovative organisation.

Pushing Forward will:

- Increase participation in sport and physical activity
- Provide iconic and inclusive facilities at Stoke Mandeville Stadium
- Ensure WheelPower is a credible and robust organisation
- Inspire people through our work, our heritage and the power of the Paralympic Games

Pushing Forward will create opportunities to encourage inactive wheelchair users as well as those already taking part and is an exciting new chapter for WheelPower.

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