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RDA National Training Centre Lowlands EC

Located in the very heart of Britain, on the site of an existing and much loved RDA centre, the National Training Centre at Lowlands in Shrewley, Warwickshire will be an aspirational and appropriate venue in which to bring together, train and inspire RDA volunteers and coaches from around the UK.

The Centre will be home to the four existing RDA Groups; stables and grazing for 20 horses; indoor and outdoor arenas; training and conference facilities; some overnight accommodation and offices.

As a working yard with indoor and outdoor arenas the Centre will provide the ideal environment for hosting practical training sessions; workshops and demonstrations as well as events and competitions.

Bringing RDA groups, training facilities, volunteers and staff together under one roof will help to connect RDA’s strategic aims and objectives with their practical delivery and provide an opportunity to ‘road test’ new ideas and initiatives in a group setting.

Replacing the current National Office, the National Training Centre will be a more practical and appropriate home for RDA UK staff and for the training and development of RDA UK volunteers.

Project Patron, HRH The Princess Royal, President of RDA

As a regular visitor to RDA Groups around the UK, I often experience the strong community that is built up around them: riders, drivers, volunteers, coaches and supporters sharing a common love and respect for horses and the good they can do.

At Lowlands, this community spirit is particularly apparent. Home to four thriving RDA groups for 30 years, Lowlands embodies all the elements that make RDA so special: a place of learning, friendship and inspiration that hundreds of riders of all ages and abilities have benefited from.

As RDA looks forward to the next 50 years, this project to build a National Training Centre will draw on all the experience and strength of community at Lowlands to create a vital and inspirational focal point for learning of which we can all be proud.

RDA has built a world-class reputation on the strength of its expertise, coaching and horsemanship. These are strengths that must remain at the heart of everything we do in the coming years. The Lowlands Project will ensure we can maintain our high standards and develop our training programmes to ensure the best possible experience for RDA’s riders and carriage drivers long into the future.

Sophie Christiansen, CBE

As someone whose life was transformed by learning to ride with RDA, I am delighted to be able to support this project to create a National Training Centre.

I was lucky enough to be taught by a series of inspirational coaches, without whom I would never have discovered a talent for riding.

RDA could see my potential as a young athlete and supported me every step of the way to the Paralympics. But achievement does not have to be a gold medal. It could be teaching a rider to sit up straight so they can go on to live independently or to be able to communicate to others to help on the journey to employment. Coaches can change lives.

Sophie Christiansen, CBE
Coaching excellence

RDA has 3,000 volunteer coaches – all trained to deliver the best possible experience to participants, with lessons that reflect each individual’s needs, aspirations and therapeutic goals.

RDA offers a world leading training pathway for supporting disabled riders and carriage drivers, and our coaches are renowned for their high level of skill and specialist knowledge.

Coaches are supported by teams of volunteers who make RDA’s activities possible. Many Volunteers take on multiple roles – requiring a range of different skills – often undertaking new challenges to help their group grow and thrive.

“I am absolutely delighted at the prospect of RDA having its own National Training Centre. We will have the capability of delivering top quality ‘in house’ training to our coaches and volunteers to improve the skills and knowledge required to provide the best possible service and experience to all our participants. This will not only include coaching skills but also the essential equine knowledge to ensure that we have the most suitable animals in the best condition to deliver that service.”

Doug Smith RDAC, Chairman RDA Equine Committee

A changing landscape

We know that delivering high quality training to coaches and volunteers has a direct impact on outcomes for our riders.

But the landscape we are working within is changing. Our coaches and volunteers are supporting ever more complex forms of disability, especially in the areas of multi-disability, learning disabilities and mental health issues.

In addition, we have expanded the range of activities on offer (including showjumping, endurance and showing) as well as the areas we provide training in (including equine welfare, safeguarding, disability awareness and volunteer management).

While our training programmes have developed as much as possible to reflect this, it is the challenge of delivering training of a consistent quality - and ensuring best practice across the organisation - that is central to the concept of the National Training Centre.

“There are around 3000 coaches in RDA giving their time - very often for free - to help support riders and carriage drivers with an increasingly broad range of disabilities. We all do it for the challenge; for the rewards of helping people achieve their goals and because we believe in what RDA does. Our coach education programme is renowned the world over, but we cannot rest on our laurels. The National Training Centre will allow us to meet the challenges we face in ensuring that all our coaches have the skills to deliver the best possible experience to our clients and ensure the highest welfare standards for our horses and ponies.”

Sue Adams-Wheeler FRDA Chairman RDA Coaching Committee

“I am absolutely delighted at the prospect of RDA having its own National Training Centre. We will have the capability of delivering top quality ‘in house’ training to our coaches and volunteers to improve the skills and knowledge required to provide the best possible service and experience to all our participants. This will not only include coaching skills but also the essential equine knowledge to ensure that we have the most suitable animals in the best condition to deliver that service.”
Making an impact: sharing one vision

What we can achieve at Lowlands

Great coaches have the ability to unlock talent; to turn aspirations into reality and to see the potential in everyone.

We know they make a real difference to the lives of their riders and carriage drivers and we want that impact to be felt by everyone who comes to RDA.

To help them become the very best that they can be, our coaches need to be able to access the very best training we can offer. At the National Training Centre, we will have the facilities, expertise and support staff to ensure our training programmes are as effective, challenging and consistently high quality as they need to be.

Bringing their learning back to their regions and groups, our coaches and volunteers will ensure that the National Training Centre has a direct impact on positive outcomes for riders and carriage drivers throughout the UK.

Putting riders first

The National Training Centre at Lowlands in Warwickshire will create a centre for learning and innovation that draws on 50 years experience delivering world-class coaching to people with disabilities.

The focus of our training will be on putting the riders’ and drivers’ needs first, and this powerful message will be at the heart of everything that happens at Lowlands.

Although we have always had shared values and aims throughout RDA, this will be the first time that we can ensure this message is heard loud and clear to everyone who receives training from us.

As part of our commitment to the ongoing success of Lowlands as a working RDA yard, we will double the number of riders there who currently benefit.

A fitting venue

Lowlands Farm has been a focal point for RDA activity for over 30 years and remains home to four RDA groups who meet there each week. Now purchased and owned by RDA UK, we can continue the vision, energy and dedication of RDA’s early pioneers at the new National Training centre.

This project offers a unique opportunity to build on the legacy of Lowlands Farm; to preserve the spirit of RDA on the site and to inspire the next generation of coaches and volunteers.
The journey to Lowlands: Timescale and affordability

The total cost of the Lowlands project, including a purpose-built training and office facility and upgrades to existing buildings and accommodation will be:

**£3.6 million**

**How we can afford it**
RDA will use the sale of the existing National Office and other assets as well as realising some of our investment portfolio to raise over £2 million.

**Fundraising**
To bridge the funding gap, our fundraising campaign needs to raise £1.6 million

**Timetable:**

- **June 2016 - August 2017**
  - Exchange contracts - ACHIEVED
  - Obtain full planning permission and complete on purchase - ACHIEVED

- **February 2018 - Spring 2019**
  - Build
- **Early Summer 2019**
  - Fully operational, opening during our 50th anniversary year

Lowlands is centrally situated for easy access from anywhere in the UK:

- 10 Minutes from the M40/M42 motorway network
- 5 Minutes from Warwick Parkway station (direct trains to London and Birmingham)
- 30 minutes from Birmingham International Airport
For this project to succeed we need money, equipment, expertise, ideas and the support and goodwill of our supporters.

There are so many ways you can help to turn this project into a reality.

- You can support us financially. We need a lot of money but it’s not an unachievable amount and all donations will take us a step closer to our goal.
- You can offer us your practical help or the benefit of your experience.
- You can help us with donations in kind - we will need everything from arena surfaces and roofing to grooming kits and wheelbarrows.
- You can even help us just simply by spreading the word - perhaps you know an individual, group or business who might be able to give their support. Please tell them about RDA and why their support will make all the difference in the world.

Whatever form your support may take, please give as much as you can.

Together we can build something truly remarkable.

How you can help:

Project contacts:

To find out more about the RDA National Training Centre project, please contact:

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