

NEXT GENERATION OF PLAY ARRIVES IN REDDITCH

Redditch Borough Council has won a NEOS outdoor electronic gaming system from Playworld Systems by impressing the company with its forward thinking approach to play and its creative plans to use NEOS as a mobile facility.

The Home Secretary Jacqui Smith and Head of Leisure & Arts Services for Redditch, Ken Watkins, were presented with the NEOS on 18 July at a ceremony attended by local youngsters keen to play on the equipment.



Ken, who is also Executive Chair of the West Midlands Institute of Sport and Recreation Management and a Regional and County Play Board member, said, “ There is always a need to push the boundaries with creative technology that moves play into the 21st century and I see NEOS as the future way forward. We entered our application to win a NEOS because we wanted to bring what we believe is the next generation of play innovation to Redditch.”

NEOS comprises four columns with interactive sounds and lights buttons and an electronic score board in the centre. The buttons light up in random sequence depending on game selection and provide a fast and exciting new way to play outdoors. It encourages memory retention, hand-eye coordination, physical strength and endurance, as well as social interaction and healthy competition.

A Mobile NEOS offers the same entertainment value as the usual model yet is permanently fixed to a trailer, so that it can be moved around from place to place in communities. On arrival at each venue, the trailer is parked up, the sides go down and the fun begins!

Mr Watkins added, “ Used as a mobile facility NEOS has immense possibilities in reaching far more young people than traditional static sites and still delivers community cohesion, enhancing neighbourhood relations between young families and parents. It is also an excellent way of engaging

young people in areas of deprivation and increasing the opportunities for youth activity around the borough, all in line with the government's agenda for young people."

Already up and running, the new NEOS is playing an integral part in the Redditch Borough Council's new Play Ranger service that was introduced in the early summer. The Play Ranger team travels around the district, especially the outlying communities, to provide supervised play as an addition to the built environment. The NEOS unit complements both traditional fixed equipment and supervised sessions, giving rise to a new fully rounded opportunity for young people.

To maximise its full usage, Redditch Borough Council will also be using NEOS to supplement special event days at its museum and country park and for family fun cultural and sports days linked to national play day events. It will also be set up in schools during term time and in the town centre on Saturday mornings targeting shoppers for its promotion and values of physical activity and competition.

Playworld Systems' managing director, Jerry Widdas said, " We are delighted that NEOS is playing an integral part in Redditch Borough Council's play and community strategies. It demonstrates the versatility of NEOS and how it can help to evolve outdoor play to suit the changing youth of today."

Further information on NEOS is available from Playworld Systems on 01531 636010, by emailing info@playworldsystem.co.uk or by visiting www.playneos.com or www.playworldsystems.co.uk.

Ends.

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CAPTION:

From left to right, Paul Clarkson and Johan Esterhuizen of Playworld Systems with Home Secretary Jacqui Smith and a local Redditch resident, at the presentation of Playworld's NEOS outdoor electronic gaming system that was won by the Borough Council.