

Rudyard Lake-based scheme is also given a brand new boat by Britannia

# Sailability centre wins award for excellence

BY LESLIE JACKSON

RUDYARD Sailability, which offers sailing courses for people with learning, sensory and physical disabilities, has become the first centre in the country to receive the prestigious award for education and excellence.

The club, based at Rudyard Lake, was presented with the award on behalf of the Royal Yachting Association by Government minister Ed Balls at a ceremony held at the lake last Friday.

It was also all hands on deck as the club launched a brand new boat donated by Britannia Building Society's Community Fund.

The specially-adapted boat, which is fully electronic, comes with a launching trolley and is valued at £5,000.

Speaking on the award and the new boat, chairman of the Rudyard Sailability, Dennis Priebe, said: "There will be 14 centres of



Ed Balls visits Rudyard Sailability. He is pictured with club member Tilly Griffiths.

excellence in the UK eventually. We will mentor clubs in the Midlands and North West.

"This is a big coup for us to be the first in the country.

"Every disability is catered for here at Rudyard. This year we have had 1,000 disabled people using the facilities."

Mr Priebe added: "We are also absolutely delighted with the donation of a boat from Britannia. It now means we will be able to give even more enjoyment and excitement to our disabled and disadvantaged visitors."

The launch of the new boat was made by the government minister and was attended by disabled youngster Tilly Griffiths of Cheddleton.

Tilly said: "The boat works like my wheelchair with a small switch. It is also my favourite colour. I am really looking forward to having a go on it."

Moorland MP Charlotte Atkins said: "This is a fantastic award for the area. I asked the government economic secretary, Ed Balls, to come and see the facilities for himself.

"The boat is fully electronic and needs a good home but the council has refused permission for a new boat house. The present old boat shed needs replacing. It is in the right location and a new building is an essential part of Rudyard Sailability.

"I am determined that Rudyard Sailability is not killed off by the Moorlands council.

"If this club did not exist the likes of Tilly and many other disabled people would be relegated and not given the opportunity like other children.

"This is a jewel in the crown at Rudyard Lake and a planning consultant has told me the club has a good case for a replacement building."

Neville Richardson, chief executive of Britannia Building Society, said: "We are very happy to support the club. The £5,000 has come from our community fund.

"As part of our 150th birthday we have given out more than £300,000 to the community."