

# Newcastle to honour Higgs Boson professor

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The man behind the famed God particle is to be honoured by Newcastle City Council with the freedom of the city

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Professor Peter Higgs

The man behind the famed God particle is to be honoured by Newcastle with the freedom of the city.

City leaders are to meet this week to agree that professor Peter Higgs is a worthy addition to the list of previous holders of the honour.

Prof Higgs achieved global fame after a multi-billion-pound research project, CERN, found evidence of the matter-producing particle predicted by the professor 50 years ago.

The physicist, 84, predicted the existence of the unique particle – the Higgs boson – needed to allow the accepted models of physics to work.

Peter Ware Higgs was born on Tyneside in 1929. His father was working for the BBC in Newcastle at the time as a sound engineer.

In 1964, while working at Edinburgh University, he dreamed up the concept of the boson while walking in the Cairngorms. Two scientific papers followed, the second of which was initially rejected and then finally published in the respected journal *Physical Review Letters*.

The Higgs boson, which scientists working with the “Big Bang atom-smasher” machine the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) believe they have found, is said to give matter mass and hold the physical fabric of the universe together.

A motion to be put before city councillors this week states: “The city council resolves to confer the Freedom of the City to professor Peter Higgs, in recognition of his work in the field of particle physics and the successful prediction of the existence of a new particle, one that gave everything mass – the Higgs boson particle.”

The motion is expected to be backed by both sides of the chamber, though it will be some weeks before the presentation ceremony.

Last night, councillor Nick Forbes, Leader of Newcastle City Council, said: “Professor Peter Higgs was born here in Newcastle, so it gives me great pleasure to be able to nominate him for the freedom of the city award. His achievements have set him apart as one of the world’s most important scientific minds, and his work should be an inspiration to us all, as we prepare to host this year’s British Science Festival and build on our global reputation as a Science City.”

The professor joins a list of the good and great who have either worked in the city, lived in Tyneside or inspired its people. They include Burmese democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi, singer Bob Geldof, and Sir Bobby Robson. Others to be honoured with the freedom of the city include Norway’s King Harald V, rugby player Jonny Wilkinson and the crew of HMS Newcastle.

The city’s decision to make the award comes after speculation that North Tyneside Council was considering such a move.

While the proposal was never acted on, the local authority was thought to have picked up on an initial suggestion that the professor had for a small time lived in Wallsend.

Newcastle, though, was beaten to the honour of awarding the freedom of a city by Bristol,

which honoured the professor – a pupil at the city’s Cotham Grammar School.

Professor Higgs was previously awarded a Doctor of Science degree by Durham University.

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