



Press release

Tuesday 27th April 2010

DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY LAUNCHED IN LUTON

Thousands of children from across Luton are set to benefit from the launch of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library - an innovative literacy programme which posts an age-appropriate book to children every month from birth until the age of five.

Funded by Wates Giving, charitable arm of Wates Family Enterprise Trust and as part of the Added Value offered by the Wates Group forming part of Luton's Building Schools for the Future programme, the Dolly Parton Imagination Library is available to every child born after 1st January 2010 in Luton. It is anticipated that in the first year 24,000 books will be distributed and approximately an additional 24,000 books every year thereafter. Approximately half a million books will be provided over the course of five years.

The Imagination Library was established by Dolly Parton in Tennessee, USA in 1996 to encourage children to develop a love of books regardless of their parental income.

Parents, children and babies were officially introduced to the initiative at Luton Central Library last week, with some of the first books distributed by Tim Wates, Chairman, Wates Family Holdings and the Mayor of Luton, Councillor Mohammed Riaz.

More children in Luton will begin to receive their books by the end of this month to coincide with Luton's Year of Literacy. Registrations for eligible children can be made at any Luton library or Children's Centre and thereafter the Dollywood Foundation in the UK will distribute the books alongside official publisher, Penguin Books UK. A panel of literacy experts has selected a good range of books appropriate for the children's age.

The initiative has also been introduced to complement Wates' work on Luton's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and further raise educational aspiration.

Dolly Parton said: "I am so happy that the Imagination Library is coming to Luton! I know everybody has worked real hard to make this happen but I want to especially thank

Wates Giving and Luton Council. I know this is Luton's year of literacy so I can't think of a better time to launch our partnership. So here's to our children and may they all enjoy a life full of reading and learning."

Luton Borough Council's BSF programme will see the construction and refurbishment of eleven secondary schools and two academies over the next four years. In a first for a BSF framework, Luton's programme will also include new affordable housing, an aquatic centre, new libraries, a 250-seat community theatre and a specialist centre for disabled children.

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For further information please contact Lisa Margis on 07748 301 005 or lisa@impactmediapr.com

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Luton Building Schools for the Future is being delivered by the Luton Learning Community Partnership (LLCP); a joint venture limited company formed between Luton Borough Council, the non-departmental public body, Partnerships for Schools and QED Education Environments, part of the Wates Group.

Wates is one of the UK's largest family-owned construction services and development companies. Established in 1897, it remains privately owned by the Wates Family. Wates employs over 2000 people and had a turnover of £945 million in 2009. www.wates.co.uk

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is a non-profit organisation currently in the USA, Canada and the UK that promotes early childhood literacy www.imaginationlibrary.com