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The Summer Reading Challenge launched in Scotland by the new Children's Laureate

The Summer Reading Challenge in Scotland was launched today at the McDonald Road Library, Edinburgh by Julia Donaldson MBE, the newly appointed UK Children's Laureate. The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge, run with libraries, is the UK's most successful reading promotion for 4-11 year olds and is being supported for the first time by Tesco Bank as part of their investment in literary programmes for children in Scotland.

Children from nearby Leith Walk Primary School were invited along to see that their local library had been transformed into a Big Top, in keeping with this year's Circus Stars theme. They were welcomed by a ringmaster, jugglers and clowns before being treated to an exclusive performance by Donaldson, best-selling author of *The Gruffalo*, *Cave Baby* and *Tyrannosaurus Drip*, amongst others.

The Summer Reading Challenge, which is free to enter at libraries, encourages children to read six library books of their choice over the summer holiday when there is traditionally a dip in reading. Over 38,000 children are expected to participate in the Challenge in Scotland this year.

Julia Donaldson, a keen supporter of libraries, said:

"The Summer Reading Challenge will ensure that during the long summer break thousands of children throughout Scotland head for their local library to take part in this fantastic programme. There they'll benefit from the enthusiasm and expertise of our librarians, helping them to choose just the right book to take home to read. Libraries are busy places, providing an invaluable resource for people of all ages. I'm a proud supporter of libraries - they can change your life, and they will make this summer holiday one to remember. It's wonderful that Tesco Bank is supporting the Summer Reading Challenge in Scotland this year."

Miranda McKearney, Chief Executive of The Reading Agency, said:

"With libraries under so much pressure, it's fantastic to have Tesco Bank's support for our work with libraries to inspire children to read. The Challenge is focused on libraries' goal of making reading fun – if children don't enjoy reading they won't develop the literacy skills they need. Now is the moment to make sure every Scottish child is a library member – it could change their lives."

In addition to supporting the programme, Tesco Bank is enabling Circus Stars to be brought to life across Scotland through *Juggling Words* – a tour of six events for family audiences combining

author appearances and circus performances with the emphasis on fun and interaction, including prizes for the best fancy dressed child on the day.

Benny Higgins, Chief Executive of Tesco Bank added:

“The local library is an important focal point for local communities. Our aim with this programme is to encourage Scottish children, parents and families to enrich their lives by reading, and to enjoy the fun, social, cultural and educational benefits it brings.”

Ends

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Notes for editors:

Summer Reading Challenge 2011 - Circus Stars

- Co-ordinated by The Reading Agency and the UK public library network since 1999, the annual Summer Reading Challenge is the UK's biggest annual reading promotion for 4-12 year olds.
- The programme is run using a mixture of incentives, activities and events, all designed to create a buzz around reading and to encourage children to read six or more library books over the summer.
- With 97% of UK library services taking part, the Summer Reading Challenge inspired 760,000 children across the UK to read over 3 million books during summer 2010.
- For the first time, 90% of Scotland's 32 local authorities are taking part in 2011, compared to 84% in 2010.
- Throughout July, 6 circus-themed “Juggling Words” events will take place across Scotland (in Falkirk, Hawick, Edinburgh, Dundee, West Dunbartonshire and Glasgow). These interactive family events will feature author appearances, circus acts and much more.
- For further details on the Summer Reading Challenge pop into your local library or go to www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk

Tesco Bank in the Community

- Tesco Bank has committed an investment of £1.5million across the next four years in sport, education and art programmes to the benefit and wellbeing of our communities across Scotland and the North East. Activities in the programme include:
 - The Tesco Bank Football Challenge – a partnership with the Scottish FA which will introduce over 72,000 p2 and p3 children to football in a fun and friendly way.
 - Tesco Bank is proud supporter of The Summer Reading Challenge Scotland, in association with The Reading Agency, which will introduce at least 20,000 young school children to books and reading.
 - Support of Yorkhill Children's Foundation, Children's North East and Prince's Trust as Tesco Bank Community Partners.
 - Support the Tesco Charity of the Year 2011 – Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer Scotland.

Tesco Bank

- Tesco Bank has 6.5 million customer accounts across 28 products and services including Insurance (motor, home, pet, travel, dental, health and life), credit cards and personal loans, personal saving products, Tesco Compare - online insurance and utilities comparison site – and ATMs
- Tesco Bank sells its products and services through multiple channels, including in-store, by telephone and online.
- Tesco Bank was launched in 1997 as a joint venture between Tesco and The Royal Bank of Scotland. In 2008, Tesco acquired the remaining 50% RBS shareholding for £950m and Tesco Bank is now fully owned by Tesco plc.
- In October 2009, Tesco Personal Finance began using the trading name Tesco Bank, in recognition of its longer-term objective of offering Tesco customers new products and services, providing customers with more choice and great value.
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Tesco in the Community

- Over the last 19 years, we have donated nearly 4 million items of equipment worth around £170 million to over 40,000 schools and clubs in the UK.
- FA Tesco Skills has now given over 2.5m coaching sessions to children aged 5-11 in England in schools and in local communities.
- Together Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer Scotland are Tesco Charity of the Year 2011 and hope to raise £5 million to fund Dementia Community Roadshows, Dementia Support and research.

Tesco in Scotland

- Tesco is Scotland's largest private sector employer with over 26,000 staff working in 150 stores.
- We have opened a number of Regeneration Partnership stores in Scotland to revitalise disadvantaged areas, working in partnership with local agencies.
- 2 million customers shop at Tesco every week in Scotland.
- We work with 150 Scottish suppliers, who provide our stores with over 1,500 products.
- We sell over £2bn of Scottish products in our stores across the UK each year.

The Reading Agency

- The Reading Agency is an independent charity working to inspire more people to read more. It is funded by Arts Council England and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. (www.readingagency.org.uk)
- Importance of reading for pleasure for children's life chances: Reading for Change, OECD, 2002. This showed that students who were more enthusiastic about and engaged in reading performed better in tests, and that being a frequent reader was more of an advantage, on its own, than wealth or social status.
- For more information about Summer Reading Challenge volunteering opportunities for young people, please visit: www.readingagency.org.uk/young/volunteering/

Julia Donaldson MBE

- Julia was born in London, but now lives in Glasgow, making her the first Scottish-based Children's Laureate.
- She is author of over 120 books for children of all ages, including The Snail and the Whale, The Magic Paintbrush and the best-selling The Gruffalo.
- Julia was also recently awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours.
- For more information please visit: <http://www.childrenslaureate.org.uk/>