

GRUFFALO AUTHOR TO BRING LITERATURE TO LIFE IN LIVE INTERNET BROADCAST

Julia Donaldson, award winning author and creator of modern classic *The Gruffalo*, will revolutionise literature for children on 26 May when she hosts a live internet broadcast to thousands of children.

The event is the latest to take place in the '**Meet Our Authors**' programme, run by Scottish Book Trust, Scotland's leading agency for the promotion of literature, reading and writing and sponsored by Scottish Friendly Assurance, one of Scotland's leading providers of tax-free family savings and investment solutions.

Meet Our Authors is an exclusive series of authors' events streamed live over the internet to provide young people, parents and teachers with the chance to get up close and personal with some of the world's leading children's writers. The programme is the first of its kind in the UK. Anyone can sign up to watch and it is completely free.

On 26 May at 11am, Julia Donaldson will talk to a live audience while being filmed and broadcast simultaneously over the internet to tens of thousands of viewers across Scotland. An astounding 65,000 children in more than 800 schools have already signed up to the event, which is supported by digital media including Facebook and YouTube featuring event information and exclusive video clips.

Julia Donaldson commented: "I am terribly excited about this very special event! Not only will I be talking to a live audience in Glasgow, but I am also going to be interacting with tens of thousands of other children across Scotland who will be tuned in on their computers - either watching from their school or at home - and who will have opportunities to ask me questions directly. I have spoken to large audiences in the past but never to that many people so this will definitely be a memorable experience for me too!"

The series of live events forms the centrepiece of a two-year long programme that will feature household names including Michael Morpurgo, Philip Pullman, Eoin Colfer, Charlie Higson and Jacqueline Wilson. The first live broadcast took place on World Book Day in March with former Children's Laureate Michael Rosen, to which over 100,000 children logged on.

Jasmine Fassl, of the Scottish Book Trust, commented: “Julia has written many well-loved and best-selling children’s books and The Gruffalo has become something of a national institution for today’s young readers. Those logging on to see Julia in action are in for a big treat and will be taking part in an event that will shape the way in which authors interact with their readers in the future.”

Neil Lovatt, sales and marketing director of Scottish Friendly, sponsor of Meet Our Authors, said: “The phenomenal demand for this event is evidence that the passion for reading at an early age is as strong as ever. Scottish Friendly has worked closely with Scottish Book Trust for over 11 years to ensure that children even in the most rural areas have equal access to the work of leading authors. We’re excited to bring to life the world of reading and writing to thousands more children in a revolutionary and interactive way.”

Ends.

Notes to editors:

1. Full details on ‘Meet Our Authors’, including forthcoming events and information on Twitter and YouTube links can be found at www.facebook.com/meetourauthors
2. To watch a preview of Julia Donaldson’s event go to www.facebook.com/meetourauthors
3. As part of the campaign, parents have the opportunity to win a Gruffalo trunki full of fantastic Gruffalo goodies. Competition details can be found at www.facebook.com/meetourauthors
4. The live events are funded by the National Lottery through the Scottish Arts Council Inspiring Communities Fund.
5. Scottish Friendly Assurance is a progressive and modern financial services group. It provides investors and their families with a wide range of products, from simple savings solutions, such as friendly society tax-free savings plans and a Child Trust Fund, to administration of sophisticated whole of market open architecture ‘wrap’ investments. www.scottishfriendly.co.uk