

**1,000 schools and over 80,000 children in just a few days!
Huge demand for Scottish Book Trust's new programme of
live virtual children's author events**

An astounding 80,000 children in 1,000 schools across the UK and overseas have already signed up to Scottish Book Trust's 'Meet Our Authors' programme which launches today, Wednesday 24th February.

Scottish Book Trust, Scotland's leading agency for the promotion of literature, reading and writing, created the programme to allow children, young people, parents and teachers across the world to get up close and personal with some of the world's leading children's authors, free of charge, with support from the Scottish Arts Council's National Lottery Fund.

The programme consists of:

- Children's author events broadcast live over the internet, in conjunction with the BBC
- Digital resource of quality content about children's authors, including Facebook and YouTube campaigns featuring exclusive clips of children's authors, in conjunction with Scottish Friendly Assurance
- Competitions for parents to win exclusive prizes related to the work of the UK's finest children's authors, in conjunction with Scottish Friendly Assurance

The series of live events is the centrepiece of the programme and will feature household names such as **Michael Rosen, Julia Donaldson, Eoin Colfer, Philip Pullman** and **Jacqueline Wilson** who will talk to a live audience whilst being filmed and broadcast simultaneously over the internet.

The first live broadcast will take place on World Book Day, Thursday 4th March, with former Children's Laureate Michael Rosen who will be doing two events - one for primary schools and one for secondary schools.

Michael Rosen commented: *"I'm really looking forward to this event. I think it's the first time I've ever done a live performance that can be watched by thousands of children in their schools. I've heard that kids all across Britain are going to tune in. And more than that - there are schools abroad joining us too. One thing that excites me is thinking that this is really a brand new kind of television. It's a new way for us to entertain and talk to each other. So thanks a million to Scottish Book Trust for inventing this day, and I'm going to do my best to give you a great show. Oh yes!"*

Neil Lovatt, sales and marketing director of Scottish Friendly said: *"In a world where many think children can't see past a computer screen, the phenomenal demand for the 'Meet Our Authors' programme shows 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 and we're delighted to bring alive the world of reading and writing to thousands more children."*

Anna Gibbons, Children's Programme Manager at Scottish Book Trust says *"What's really special about these events is that any school pupil can watch - it doesn't matter if they live in a very remote place, or if their school can't afford transport to an event ... it's about breaking down traditional barriers and giving everyone the opportunity to take part"*

Ian Munro, co-director of Arts at Scottish Arts Council said: *"This exciting project is a real step forward in broadening access to literature for children and young people across Scotland. Its innovative approach will help engender enthusiasm, establish enduring connections, and – literally – inspire communities on a national scale, and well-beyond."*

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 Michael Rosen's event go to www.facebook.com/meetourauthors
3. As part of the campaign, parents have the opportunity to win a piece of original artwork from Michael Rosen's much-loved picture book *Bear in the Cave*, courtesy of Scottish Friendly Assurance. All competition details are on the website listed below.
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
6. The programme was successfully piloted last May 2009 with Anthony Horowitz when over 10,000 children in 250 Scottish schools logged on for the event.