



## **Brand New Exhibition with Children's Laureate Julia Donaldson announced for Seven Stories from 17 March 2012**

BRAND NEW EXHIBITION COMING SOON:

***A Squash and a Squeeze: Sharing Stories with Julia Donaldson***  
**17 March 2012 until March 2013**  
**Seven Stories, the national centre for children's books**

Seven Stories announces a brand new exhibition with Julia Donaldson, current Children's Laureate, best known as the creator of the *Gruffalo*, which brings her captivating story worlds to life. ***A Squash and a Squeeze: Sharing Stories with Julia Donaldson*** opens to the public on 17 March 2012 at Seven Stories, the national centre for children's books, based in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Visitors can find out how she wrote modern classics such as *The Gruffalo*, *Princess Mirror-Belle*, *The Troll* and most recently *The Highway Rat* and explore original artwork by her many illustrators – most famously Axel Scheffler, but also Lydia Monks, David Roberts, Nick Sharratt, Karen George and Emily Gravett.

Julia Donaldson said:

*"I am thrilled that my work, and that of my illustrators, is to be presented in such a stimulating and child-friendly way, with so many mini-words and activities. Because of my love of drama and song, I am particularly excited about the theatre and the juke box!"*

Kate Edwards, Director of Seven Stories said:

*"We are delighted to be working with Julia to bring many of her much loved stories and characters to life within this exhibition in groundbreaking and interactive ways. We will also explore the importance of rhythm and rhyme in language acquisition. This not to be missed exhibition will delight her huge following of fans and will also attract new audiences to her ever popular books and songs."*

The exhibition will follow her journey from song writer for children's television programmes to current Children's Laureate and show how she inspires her readers with story, rhyme and rhythm. Visitors can join in with stories and songs in the exhibition named after Julia's very first book, *A Squash and A Squeeze* which originally sprang from a song.

Children and their families can share stories and explore sensory environments based on Julia's books. They can follow in *Toddle Waddle's* footsteps, climb into the cave with the *Cave Baby* and meet *The Gruffalo*. Sing-a-long to her songs on Julia's Jukebox or perform a play on our stage.

Seven Stories will explore the impact sharing stories has on child development through learning projects in partnership with Action for Children and children with hearing impairments.

Julia Donaldson will visit Seven Stories on Thursday 12 and Friday 13 April 2012 to run two exclusive events. Join Julia for an hour of storytelling, songs and fun in *The Gruffalo and Friends with Julia Donaldson* on Thursday 12 April at 11am and 2.30pm. Princesses big and small can join Julia for a fun filled event based around *Princess Mirror-Belle* on Friday 13 April at 11am. All three

events will be followed by public book signings, have very limited capacity and can be booked online at [www.sevenstories.org.uk](http://www.sevenstories.org.uk) or by calling Seven Stories on 0845 271 0777 ext 715.

This exhibition is supported by Scholastic, Macmillan Children's Books and Alison Green Books.

Seven Stories' current exhibitions are ***Through the Magic Mirror, the World of Anthony Browne*** until 29 February and ***Daydreams and Diaries: the Story of Jacqueline Wilson*** until September 2012 alongside an inspiring events programme for all ages. This exhibition with Julia Donaldson will make it the third concurrent Seven Stories exhibition with current or former Children's Laureates, as Anthony Browne held the position between 2009-11 and Jacqueline Wilson 2005-7.

Seven Stories is based on Lime Street, Ouseburn Valley, Newcastle. It is open Monday – Saturday 10am-5pm and Sundays and Bank Holidays 10am-4pm. Admission charges are £5.50 for a child (under 4s FREE), £6.50 for an adult and £19 for a family with annual passes available.

See [www.sevenstories.org.uk](http://www.sevenstories.org.uk) for more information.

### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

**Media are invited to the private view of the exhibition at 4pm on Thursday 15 March. Please RSVP to [lauren.regan@sevenstories.org.uk](mailto:lauren.regan@sevenstories.org.uk)**

**Media previews and limited filming and interview opportunities with Julia Donaldson are available on Thursday 15 and Friday 16 March. Please contact us for details.**

To visit the exhibition and to request interviews and high quality images please contact:

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### **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

#### **Julia Donaldson**

Julia Donaldson is one of the UK's most popular children's authors. She started her career writing songs for children's television. In 1993, one of her songs was made into a book, ***A Squash and A Squeeze***. Since then she has written over one hundred books and plays for children and teenagers.

Julia is probably best known for her partnership with Axel Scheffler, illustrator of best-selling book ***The Gruffalo***, amongst many others. She has also worked with many different illustrators, among them Lydia Monks, Nick Sharratt and David Roberts.

In 2011 Julia was announced as the Children's Laureate, for a term of two years, and was awarded an MBE in The Queen's Birthday Honours. More information can be found on her website: [www.juliadonaldson.co.uk](http://www.juliadonaldson.co.uk)

#### **Children's Laureate**

The idea for the Children's Laureate originated from a conversation between (the then) Poet Laureate Ted Hughes and children's writer Michael Morpurgo. The role of Children's Laureate, which

has a bursary of £15,000, is awarded once every two years to an eminent writer or illustrator of children's books to celebrate outstanding achievement in their field. The appointment of a Children's Laureate acknowledges the importance of exceptional children's authors in creating the readers of tomorrow. The Children's Laureateship is sponsored by Waterstones, the UK's leading specialist bookseller and run by independent reading and writing charity Booktrust. The role of Children's Laureate covers the whole of the UK. For more information please visit [www.childrenslaureate.org.uk](http://www.childrenslaureate.org.uk)

### **Seven Stories, the national centre for children's books (founded 1996)**

Seven Stories is Britain's home for children's literature. It champions the art of children's books to ensure its place as an integral part of childhood and of our national cultural life.

Until Seven Stories was founded in 1996 there was no place in the UK that championed the art form or its young audience – it is the only gallery dedicated to children's literature in the UK and one of just a few in the world. Its founders were pioneering in their approach to addressing this cultural void and ambitious in their decision to locate it in the Northeast; a region with lower levels of childhood aspiration and committed to the societal benefits of cultural investment. Seven Stories is housed in a specially converted Victorian warehouse in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Arts Council England and Newcastle City Council regularly fund Seven Stories' work, giving children's literature status and a national home and establishing new ways of engaging young audiences.

#### **Since opening Seven Stories has:**

- Attracted 422,000 visitors to its centre and over 678,000 visitors to touring exhibitions
- Worked with 71,000 school children, 19,000 children and adults through outreach projects and 2000 professionals through professional development courses.
- Shown 20 major exhibitions.
- Developed one of the largest modern children's literature Collections in Britain, including nationally and internationally significant holdings representing work of over 80 authors and illustrators, including David Almond, Philip Pullman, Michael Rosen, Edward Ardizzone, Judith Kerr and Shirley Hughes.
- Won many accolades, including the prestigious Eleanor Farjeon Award in 2010 for its outstanding contribution to children's literature.
- Seven Stories has been nominated for the prestigious 2012 Kids in Museum's Family Friendly awards.

[www.sevenstories.org.uk](http://www.sevenstories.org.uk)

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