



British Land commits to tenth year of award-winning Young Readers Programme

- Partnership with National Literacy Trust has helped over 42,000 children since launching in 2011 –
- Launched a rapid response project at 20 British Land sites so that thousands of vulnerable children most seriously impacted by COVID-19 will receive 6,000 books and 3,000 literacy activity packs throughout the summer -

14 September 2020

British Land is partnering with the National Literacy Trust for the tenth consecutive year of the Young Readers Programme. The award-winning initiative has helped over 42,000 children under the age of 11.

The programme, which runs in schools and areas around British Land sites, was set up to encourage children to develop a love of reading outside the classroom. In turn this supports development of literacy skills, a key influence of social mobility.

Over the past nine years, the British Land Young Readers Programme has:

- Supported over 42,000 primary school children to read for enjoyment
 - 1 in 3 children who have participated in the Young Readers Programme is eligible for free school meals – more than twice the national average
- Gifted over 144,546 books, with every child choosing three brand new books each
- Worked with 520 schools and trained 644 teachers
- Hosted c.1,500 events in schools and British Land sites

This year saw 20 British Land retail sites and London campuses involved in the programme. Since launch there has been strong year-on-year growth in engagement with the Young Readers Programme – in the first year the programme was piloted at four sites, with 998 children taking part. It is now rolled out across 20 sites, with the past year seeing 8,234 primary school children benefiting.

Anna Devlet, Head of Community, British Land said: “We’re delighted to expand our Young Readers Programme into a decade-long partnership with the National Literacy Trust. This fantastic initiative has achieved great success over the past nine years, playing a vital role in encouraging children to develop a love of reading and helping with literacy skills that meaningful impacts on social mobility.

“Building on this excellent work, we are proud to continue our support of the programme, recognising that as a long-term investor in our places, we have the unique opportunity to make a meaningful impact within these communities, supporting their prosperity and wellbeing.”

Jonathan Douglas, Chief Executive of the National Literacy Trust, said: “Reading for enjoyment is one of the most effective ways to help children reach their full potential. Our research shows that encouraging children to read can have a positive impact on their educational attainment, mental wellbeing, employability prospects and life outcomes.

“Our partnership with British Land and its communities across the country is the longest lasting business and charity partnership to support literacy in the UK. Together, we have ensured that the Young Readers Programme could reach more than 42,000 children, inspiring them to choose books to enjoy and keep. What’s more, our rapid response to COVID-19 will see us support the literacy and wellbeing of thousands of vulnerable children whose learning and access to books has been most seriously disrupted by the pandemic. As we continue our vital partnership with British Land into the next decade, we hope to support the literacy and life chances of even more children who need it most.”



COVID-19 response

The COVID-19 pandemic has particular implications for those families and children experiencing digital exclusion who do not have access to online learning at home across the UK. 700,000 children from disadvantaged backgrounds nationally do not have this access. As a result, the National Literacy Trust and British Land acted rapidly to ensure that children on the Young Readers Programme were still able to benefit from the programme despite school closures through three key areas:

Immediate response: physical and digital resources for schools:

- Rapidly creating a brand-new set of Young Readers Programme activities and resources, tailored to be used at home rather than at school, which were sent out to all participating schools ahead of closures and given to parents
- Sending out physical books with next day delivery to schools, so many teachers were able to send their children home with brand new books to enjoy before schools closed
- Making a library of ebooks available to all participating schools, providing teachers with an unlimited number of downloads for their pupils to access from March to the end of June
- Creating [Young Readers at Home](#) – an online activity pack to bring books and stories to life for children aged 5-11 to support children's learning at home owing to school closures, which has had more than 6,000 visits to date

Community outreach:

- Investing in community outreach to donate thousands of children's books and activity packs throughout the summer to vulnerable families in 20 communities across the UK where British Land sites are located, to be distributed via local food banks and community hubs.
 - 300 books and 150 activity packs have been delivered to each of the 20 sites taking part in this initiative, totalling 6,000 books and 3,000 activity packs

Online events: Young Readers Story Club

- Creating the [Young Readers Story Club](#) to replace the usual fun literacy events held at British Land sites – a weekly series of videos to support children's listening and creative skills and help spark a love of stories
- During the summer term and the summer holidays, each week different children's authors, illustrators, poets or storytellers share stories on a particular theme and set children a fun challenge to complete at home. So far, 3,000 families have visited the webpage to watch the videos

In 2018, British Land and the National Literacy Trust won the Charity Times Award for Corporate Community Local Involvement for the Young Readers Programme and was Highly Commended in the highly competitive Education Award category at the 2017 Business in the Community Responsible Business Awards. British Land has been a proud signatory of the Vision for Literacy Business Pledge since its inception in 2015. Led by the National Literacy Trust on behalf of the National Literacy Forum, the Business Pledge is a commitment from the business community to help close the nation's literacy gap and boost social mobility.

More information about British Land's Young Readers Programme in partnership with the National Literacy Trust can be found [here](#).

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Notes to Editors

About British Land

Our portfolio of high quality UK commercial property is focused on London Offices and Retail around the UK. We own or manage a portfolio valued at £14.8bn (British Land share: £11.2bn) as at 31 March 2020 making us one of Europe's largest listed real estate investment companies.

Our strategy is to provide places which meet the needs of our customers and respond to changing lifestyles - Places People Prefer. We do this by creating great environments both inside and outside our buildings and use our scale and placemaking skills to enhance and enliven them. This expands their appeal to a broader range of occupiers, creating enduring demand and driving sustainable, long term performance.

Our Offices portfolio comprises three office-led campuses in central London as well as high quality standalone buildings and accounts for 60% of our portfolio. Our Retail portfolio is focused on retail parks and shopping centres, and accounts for 35% of our portfolio. Increasingly our focus is on providing a mix of uses and this is most evident at Canada Water, our 53 acre redevelopment opportunity where we have plans to create a new neighbourhood for London.

Sustainability is embedded throughout our business. Our places, which are designed to meet high sustainability standards, become part of local communities, provide opportunities for skills development and employment and promote wellbeing. In April 2016 British Land received the Queen's Award for Enterprise: Sustainable Development, the UK's highest accolade for business success for economic, social and environmental achievements over a period of five years.

Further details can be found on the British Land website at www.britishland.com

About the National Literacy Trust

Our charity is dedicated to improving the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of those who need it most, giving them the best possible chance of success in school, work and life. We run Literacy Hubs and campaigns in communities where low levels of literacy and social mobility are seriously impacting people's lives. We support schools and early years settings to deliver outstanding literacy provision, and we campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians, businesses and parents. Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy and drive our interventions. Literacy is a vital element of action against poverty and our work changes children's life stories.

Visit literacytrust.org.uk to find out more, donate or sign up for our free email newsletter. You can also find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

The National Literacy Trust is a registered charity no. 1116260 and a company limited by guarantee no. 5836486 registered in England and Wales and a registered charity in Scotland no. SC042944. Registered address: 68 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL.