

Disney and Make-A-Wish Create First of its Kind Disney Wish Experience For Wish Children in the UK

News release for immediate use – 20th September 2021

The Walt Disney Company UK & Ireland, Make-A-Wish UK and The Kentown Wizard Foundation have come together to create a unique, first of its kind Disney Wish experience in the UK. For three weeks in September, the Elvetham Hotel in Hampshire has been transformed into an Enchanted Manor and plays host to 150 families for a magical three-day immersive experience for children who have had their Disney wish put on hold due to the pandemic and related travel restrictions.

Over the course of their stay, Make-A-Wish families can take part in a variety of incredible Disney activities, including a magical breakfast with Mickey and friends; a chance to perfect their web-slinging skills with Spider-Man himself; a Toy Story carnival with Buzz and Woody; Jedi training; story time with Belle, or even meet Anna, Elsa and Olaf, who are visiting from Arendelle.

Several celebrities are getting involved in the Disney Wish experience and lending their support to the wish families by volunteering at the event. Keen to get in on the action, TV presenters Kate Garraway, Emma Willis, Stephen Mulhern and Frankie and Wayne Bridge are among the stars spending time with the children and their families, hearing more about their stories and helping make sure they experience all the Mickey-magic and fairy-tale fun.

Ella Wheatley, eight, from Monmouth in Wales, who is living with a genetic condition called GLUT1 that requires a medically managed diet, is just one of the children who's excited about her wish to meet the Fairy Godmother and enjoy all things Disney.

Her mum Emily said: "Ella's wish was truly incredible just what she wanted and more. I can't pick a highlight, it was just everything. We were fully immersed in the experience and didn't have to worry about anything. We didn't want to come home!"

Deborah Armstrong, Senior Vice President and Country Manager, Disney UK & Ireland, said: "This event exceeded our expectations on every level. To see the positive impact this Disney Wish Experience has had on children and families has been humbling and inspiring. We are so grateful to Make-A-Wish and the Kentown Wizard Foundation for enabling us to restart granting wishes after such a difficult year and I want to personally thank all of the families who made it so special."

Make-A-Wish Chief Executive Jason Suckley said: "We've witnessed children gaping in awe at Disney characters they've only ever seen on a screen; going on the carousel 12 times in a row; practising their Marvel character skills; spending their Elf coins at the Toy Story carnival and enjoying much-needed time together with their families - away from the pressures of their daily lives. It's been truly wonderful to grant 150 wishes this month and on behalf of Make-A-Wish UK I'd like to thank Disney, The Kentown Wizard Foundation, all the suppliers involved and every single person who helped to make these wishes so personalised and precious."

Margaret Ingram, Chief Executive of The Kentown Wizard Foundation, said: "Sadly, COVID-19 temporarily derailed our ambitious four-year plan to fund all of the Disneyland Paris wishes being granted to children living in the UK. However, during these turbulent times we have been extremely impressed by Make-A-Wish UK's determination to continue delivering transformational wishes. This is one of many reasons why we are extremely passionate about funding the UK Disney Wish experience. Our aim remains the same, to enable children living with serious, life-limiting conditions and disabilities to receive their Disney Wish and we sincerely hope that these wishes will bring joy and strength to families at a time when they need it most."

Frankie and Wayne Bridge said: "We know how much our boys love Disney so we can really understand the excitement these families must be feeling. It's great to see the children interacting with their favourite characters and having their dreams fulfilled. Whilst the last two years have been tough for so many people, it's brilliant to see the Make-a-Wish children finally able to experience the magic. We're honoured to be a part of such an amazing experience and see the joy that today is bringing for all involved."

Kate Garraway said: "I'm delighted to be involved with the Disney Make A Wish event, and to experience the magic first-hand with all these inspiring young children and their families. Witnessing their dreams being brought to life after such a difficult few years is wonderful, and I'm so lucky to be able to join them in creating these life-long memories"

For the past 40 years, Disney and Make-A-Wish have been providing magic to wish kids and their families, starting with the very first wish granted at Disneyland Resort in 1980. Disney is one of the largest wish granters for Make-A-Wish across the globe, having fulfilled more than 140,000 wishes globally. These experiences not only brighten lives for a special moment, but also help wish children and their families build emotional resilience and help replace fear with confidence, sadness with joy and anxiety with hope.

In a recent study carried out by the New Economics Foundation, it was identified that in addition to creating a positive experience, well-known Disney characters actually help build trust for children in anxious circumstances. The research also identifies that, through the power of Disney's storytelling and characters, it can inspire positive feelings, experiences and memories, creating Moments That Matter and helping children and young people to cope where and when they need it most.

Partners involved in the event include: A1 Limos, Agility Logistics, Blackout, Coca-Cola, Cleanzair, Direct Mobility, Disney+, Disneyland Paris, Disney Studios, eBuyer, EDC, Elvetham Hotel, Fairybricks, Front Page, GES, Hasbro, Headstart, Holdens Direct, JL Live, MXW, P & G, Pocket Memories, Polaroid, Poundland, Premier Relocation, Rolla-ramp, Rhino, Rubies, Select Brands, ShopDisney UK, Tisserand, TDS, Unilever, Wearetricycle

The event, a collaboration between Make-A-Wish UK, The Walt Disney Company and The Kentown Wizard Foundation will take place at the Elvetham Hotel in Hampshire and operate within current UK pandemic restrictions.

To find out more about how wishes can help, visit [make-a-wish.org.uk](https://www.make-a-wish.org.uk) or follow the charity on social media [@makeawishuk](https://twitter.com/makeawishuk)

– ENDS –

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Disney's Social Purpose

As well as being a responsible business, Disney is dedicated to providing comfort and inspiration to those in need and creating inspiration and opportunity for those who want to improve their world. Disney's partnership with Make-A-Wish and other not-for-profit partners across Europe is an example of how, working with others, we help build emotional resilience. Together we bring the power of our brand, stories and characters to inspire and create Moments that Matter for children and young people when they need it the most. In 2020, we created over 39,000 life-changing moments across Europe. For more information on our programmes and our long-standing charitable partners, please click [here](#).

About Make-A-Wish UK

Every day, the lives of 10 families in the UK are changed forever when a child is diagnosed with a serious illness. From that moment, childhood takes a backseat to medical appointments and worry. A wish helps to restore that childhood and puts *worry* on the backseat. It provides an opportunity to choose something positive to look forward to and the chance to be a child first and a patient second.

Make-A-Wish UK is a registered charity that was established in the UK in 1986 to support children and young people diagnosed with a serious illness or life-limiting condition, by granting them their dearest wish. The charity receives no Government funding - registered charity numbers: 295672 in England and Wales, SC037479 in Scotland.

ABOUT THE KENTOWN WIZARD FOUNDATION

The Kentown Wizard Foundation is based in Blackpool and was set up by philanthropist Kenneth Townsley in 2015. The foundations mission is to have a positive impact on the lives of children and young adults with serious, life-limiting conditions and disabilities. They do this, by making grants to UK registered charities whose aims, and values are closely aligned with their own and to date, have successfully gifted over £12,000,000.

Registered Charity Number - 1163956

NOTES TO EDITORS

- We do not use the phrase 'terminally ill' and ask that you follow suit because some poorly children and young people are not made aware of the exact nature of their diagnosis and we respect their family's approach to their situation. Some also recover fully from their illness.
- Please refer to us as Make-A-Wish® UK in the first instance to distinguish us from affiliates in other countries and hyperlink to our website when you mention the charity online: www.make-a-wish.org.uk
- Please and hyperlink to the relevant websites when you mention the 3 way partnership online:



- www.make-a-wish.org.uk
- www.kentownwizard.org
- www.disney.co.uk