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**\*\*\*STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 1:45PM BST WEDNESDAY 7 JUNE 2017\*\*\***

**LAUREN CHILD ANNOUNCED AS 10th WATERSTONES CHILDREN’S LAUREATE**

**Charlie and Lola author says, “children today need more freedom to dream and imagine”**

Lauren Child, artist and highly-acclaimed author and illustrator of the bestselling and award-winning Charlie and Lola and Clarice Bean picture books and Ruby Redfort novels, has today (Wednesday 7 June) been crowned the tenth Waterstones Children’s Laureate for 2017 – 2019. Child was presented with her medal from outgoing Waterstones Children’s Laureate Chris Riddell at an afternoon ceremony at City Hall in Hull, which is UK City of Culture 2017.

The role of Waterstones Children’s Laureate is awarded every two years to an eminent author or illustrator of children’s books to celebrate outstanding achievement in their field and to acknowledge their importance in creating the readers of tomorrow.

Child, a former artist’s assistant to Damian Hirst, is celebrated not only for creating her own books, but translating them into other media – most significantly in her role as executive producer of global hit television series *Charlie and Lola*. Launching her laureateship by championing creativity, she said: “I want to inspire children to believe in their own creative potential to make their own stories and drawings and ignite in them the delight of reading for pleasure. In an increasingly fast paced world, children need the freedom to dream and imagine; to enjoy reading, drawing and telling their own stories without value judgement or restraint”. She intends to encourage individuality and creativity in children by seeding ideas throughout her tenure that spark stories and drawings and to “celebrate random acts of imagination”.

Recognizing the legacy of the role she is inheriting, Child said: “I am honoured to be chosen as the Waterstones Children’s Laureate and proud to be following in the illustrious footsteps of such giants of literature as Sir Quentin Blake, continuing the League of Laureates’ great work in elevating the status of children’s books in the UK’s cultural landscape”. She revealed plans to forge alliances with other expressive mediums during her term in office, saying: “My books have taken inspiration from many different art forms – from the illustrations of E.H. Shepard through Scandinavian Design, dolls houses and miniatures as well as the films of Woody Allen and Alfred Hitchcock. Now I would like to focus on building stronger links between the world of children’s literature and other art forms such as fine art, film, music, television and design.”

Child was presented with the specially commissioned solid silver Waterstones Children’s Laureate medal and a £15,000 bursary cheque by outgoing Laureate Chris Riddell. Ceremony host was CBBC Blue Peter presenter Radzi Chinyanganya, one of the selection committee of the 2017 – 2019 Laureate, alongside Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy, Children’s Buyer at Waterstones Florentyna Martin and all members of the Waterstones Children’s Laureate Steering Group.

**Chair of the Waterstones Children’s Laurate Steering Group, Abigail Campbell said:** “Lauren Child is utterly brilliant. Loved by adults as well as children, her work is witty, innovative and absolutely unique. We're thrilled to announce her as the 10th Waterstones Children's Laureate”.

The post of Children’s Laureate was established in 1999. Previous Laureates are: Quentin Blake 1999 – 2001, Anne Fine 2001 – 2003, Michael Morpurgo 2003 – 2005, Jacqueline Wilson 2005 – 2007, Michael Rosen 2007 – 2009, Anthony Browne 2009 – 2011, Julia Donaldson 2011 – 2013, Malorie Blackman 2013 – 2015, Chris Riddell 2015 – 2017. Lauren Child is the 2017-2019 incumbent, with her tenure ending in June 2019, the 20th anniversary year of the post.

Waterstones is the lead sponsor of the Children’s Laureate post, with other sponsorship and funding coming from children’s publishers and Arts Council England. Independent literature charity BookTrust continues to manage the award.

**Waterstones MD James Daunt comments on Child’s appointment**: “Children’s books are in the rudest of health, with sales charging ahead and children’s sections annexing ever greater parts of bookshops. Vital to our industry, it is a wave of creativity, spurred by exceptionally talented and generous authors with the Waterstones Children’s Laureate playing a huge part as a catalyst and inspiration. We could not be more delighted and grateful than to have Lauren Child pick up this baton.”

**BookTrust’s Chief Executive Diana Gerald said**: “TK”.

**The Twitter hashtag for the Waterstones Children’s Laureate is #ChildrensLaureate and the Twitter handle is @uklaureate**

**For further information, interview requests or images, please contact Thi Dinh or Dani McCarthy at Riot Communications on 020 3174 0118/ thi@riotcommunications.com 07391 677103 /****dani@riotcommunications.com** **07341 826148**

**Notes for editors**

**Lauren Child**

Lauren Child is a multi-award-winning, bestselling writer and artist.

Her first two books were published in 1999 – *I Want a Pet* and *Clarice Bean, That’s Me*, and she won the prestigious Kate Greenaway Medal in 2000 for *I Will Not Ever Never Eat a Tomato*, the first of her Charlie and Lola picture books. Child published her first Clarice Bean novel in 2002 – *Utterly Me, Clarice Bean*. The Clarice Bean series has sold over 6 million copies worldwide.

In October 2005, the BBC launched a 78-part animated series of Charlie and Lola. The series has won four BAFTAS and is aired in more than 34 countries.

In 2008 Child launched UNESCO’s ‘My Life is a Story’ Campaign for UNESCO’s Programme for the Education of Children in Need, and was named a UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2008. In 2010 she was awarded an MBE for Services to Literature.

Child is an international ambassador for the excellence of UK illustration: she’s been at the forefront of innovation for 15 years and has raised the profile of illustration as a sophisticated art form for all ages. She works with mixed media, pioneered text as an integral part of illustration and collaborates with artists across different fields. She is a trustee of the recently-formed House of Illustration.

Child is also a passionate advocate for visual literacy and the importance of quality picture books for children.

The latest Charlie and Lola book, *A Dog with Nice Ears*, will be published in paperback Autumn 2017. Ruby Redfort #6 *Blink and You Die*, the final book in the series was published in October 2016.

**About the Waterstones 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 Waterstones 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 Waterstones Children's Laureate acknowledges the importance of exceptional children's authors in creating the readers of tomorrow. The role of Laureate covers the whole of the UK and is administered by BookTrust, the children’s reading charity, and sponsored by Waterstones. It would be appreciated if you could ensure your editorial is factually accurate by referring to the role in its full title, Waterstones Children’s Laureate, at least once. For more information please visit www.childrenslaureate.org.uk.

**Waterstones Children’s Laureate selection**

The selection committee consider nominations for the Waterstones Children's Laureate from a range of organisations representing librarians, publishers, writers, illustrators, literature development workers, including the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and booksellers.

**Waterstones Children’s Laureate Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee is made up of representatives of the children’s book world who provide a range of expertise and guidance with which to support the Waterstones Children’s Laureate’s work. The current Waterstones Children’s Laureate Steering Committee comprises: Abigail Campbell, Chair and freelance children’s literature consultant; Sue Ball, Libraries Service Development Manager, Staffordshire County Council; Julia Eccleshare, Children’s Director of Hay Festival and children’s literature expert; Kate Edwards, Chief Executive of Seven Stories in Newcastle; Lindsey Fraser, literary agent; Ian Lamb, Head of Children’s Marketing and Publicity at Bloomsbury, representing the Publishers Association Children’s Group; Vanessa Lewis, Owner of The Book Nook bookshop, representing the Booksellers Association Children’s Group; Professor Kim Reynolds, University of Newcastle and Deborah Texeira, primary school teacher in Warwickshire.

**Waterstones**

Waterstones is the UK and Eire’s leading high street bookseller with 280 shops. It employs over 3,000 booksellers. Waterstones is the only national specialist book retailer of scale in the UK, with the average sized shop carrying a range of around 30,000 individual books and with over 200,000 titles in the largest shop.

**BookTrust**

BookTrust is the UK’s largest children’s reading charity. We work to inspire a love of reading in children because we know that reading can transform lives. Each year we reach 2.5 million children across the UK with books, resources and support to help develop a love of reading, because we know that reading can transform lives. Every parent receives a BookTrust book in the baby’s first year. Our books are delivered via health, library, schools and early year’s practitioners, and are supported with guidance, advice and resources to encourage the reading habit. Reading for pleasure has a dramatic impact on educational outcomes, well-being and social mobility, and is also a huge pleasure in itself. We are committed to starting children on their reading journey and supporting them throughout. www.booktrust.org.uk