

27th November 2008

WALES & WEST UTILITIES STEP UP TO GRASSROOTS CHALLENGE

Gas distribution company, Wales and West Utilities joined together with local charity Devon Community Foundation today to support Exeter's Merry Go Round Toy & Leisure Library with a £5,000 Grassroots Grant.

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Wales & West Utilities is one of the first companies to step up to Devon Community Foundation's Grassroots Challenge, which matches donations £1 for £1 to make local giving go further for small community and voluntary groups across the county.

This means the £5,000 from Wales & West Utilities is doubled by the Foundation to create a £10,000 Wales & West Utilities Acorn Fund. The company will continue to build its fund over the years and the income generated will make grants to support voluntary groups like the Toy Library across Devon each year, every year.

Jackie Roe, Corporate Affairs Manager for Wales & West Utilities said: "Joining Devon Community Foundation's Grassroots Challenge means our donation is doubled so that it becomes a really effective way of supporting people in Devon.

"We will grow our Wales & West Utilities Acorn Fund over the coming years so that we can have a long term impact on helping improve the lives of local people and communities".

The Merry Go Round Toy & Leisure Library was set up nine years ago to provide toys for children of all ages, including those with disabilities. A second library opened two years ago, providing an inexpensive way for parents, carers, childminders and grandparents to borrow toys and play equipment for children of all ages – including teenagers.

The Grassroots Grant will help run the facility and keep the service going for parents and carers on a budget.

Fiona Daughton, the Toy Library co-ordinator comments, "It's very difficult for small voluntary groups like us to cover our running costs so the Grassroots Grants is a godsend. Up to 30 families and groups a week use the service and with the credit crunch now hitting, our service is even more important than ever to parents and carers on a budget."

Kathy Beechen, Acting Director of Devon Community Foundation adds, "We're delighted that Wales & West Utilities has joined our Grassroots Challenge. Being able to match donations £1 for £1 is a fantastic way for local companies to make their local giving increase in value, last longer and do more for local people and communities."

Devon Community Foundation has made nearly 60 Grassroots Grants totalling over £187,000 over the last 4 months. Other groups supported recently in Exeter include Ladysmith Community Action Team and Countess Wear Community Association.

Anyone who would like to find out more about the Grassroots Challenge and Grassroots Grants should call Kathy at the Community Foundation on 01882 235887.
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Press enquiries re Devon Community Foundation: Sarah Gunn 01752 509581 or Karen Dunton on 01882 235887.

EDITORS NOTES:

- Devon Community Foundation is Devon's local charity for local people.
- Over the past six years it has made £6 million in grants to over 1,700 small voluntary and community groups helping local people in Devon.
- It is one of 56 Community Foundations across the UK which hold approx £150 m in assets and make approx £70 m in grants a year. (It is the UK's 4th largest charitable grant maker)
- It's Grassroots Challenge means all donations made to the Foundation before September 2009 can be matched £1 for £1. The aim is to build a permanent £3 million Grassroots Challenge Fund to provide a permanent source of small Grassroots Grants to voluntary and community groups helping local people in Devon. Companies and individuals can use the match funding to build their own Grassroots Fund to give to local causes in their name.

Wales and West Utilities

Wales & West Utilities, with depots based throughout the South West and Wales, is a regulated gas distribution business with around 34,000 km of gas distribution pipelines located in the South West and Wales. Covering 1/6th of the UK, WWU serves a catchment area with a population of 7.4 million.

The company's primary role, undertaken on behalf of 'gas suppliers', is to transport gas to the gas meters of homes and businesses - from Lands End to the Northern Welsh border.

Wales & West Utilities does not sell gas but ensures that it is piped in a safe and efficient way. The company is also responsible for dealing with gas escapes, laying new gas pipes and replacing and moving pipes and meters.

Wales & West Utilities recognises the importance of good corporate citizenship, working in and supporting the communities it serves.