

Local schools team up with Fort Kinnaird to get children reading

More than 260 children from Edinburgh have taken part in storytelling sessions organised by Fort Kinnaird aimed at helping them fall in love with reading.

The event allowed children to listen to stories from professional storyteller Ron Fairweather and were part of the Young Readers Programme, an award-winning initiative sponsored by Fort Kinnaird co-owner British Land and run-in partnership with the National Literacy Trust, that is designed to encourage children to read outside of the classroom.

Ron Fairweather has been writing and performing stories, songs, and poems for decades, including performing at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, the National Museum of Edinburgh, and The Scottish Storytelling Centre.

During the literacy-focussed events, pupils from Niddrie Mill Primary School, Brunstane Primary School, and Castleview Primary School were also able to take home a book of their choice.

This marks the twelfth year of British Land's partnership with the National Literacy Trust, and since the programme launched at Fort Kinnaird, it has supported more than 2,500 school children and seen more than 7,600 books donated across Edinburgh.

Research by the National Literacy Trust has shown that owning a book means children are more likely to say they enjoy reading and are more inclined to read in their free time. However, 6.5% of children in the UK do not own a book, which equates to half a million children across the country*. This rises to one in 10 (9.7%) children from disadvantaged backgrounds, which is the demographic this partnership aims to reach.

With reading for enjoyment proven to have a positive effect on children's reading skill* as well as their wellbeing and mental health, the Young Readers Programme initiative aims to give support and help with the development of children in under privileged areas by giving them access to books.

Liam Smith, centre director at Fort Kinnaird, said: "Supporting our community is very important to us, so we're incredibly proud of the Young Readers Programme and all the local children and families we've been able to support in the last 12 years.

"It's always very rewarding to hear how the children are inspired by the stories and start to get excited about reading and bringing their own books home."

Martin Galway, Head of School Programmes at the National Literacy Trust, said: "The right book, at the right moment, can change a child's life.

"That's what the Young Readers Programme has been doing with British Land for the last 12 years – giving children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to experience enchanting storytelling events, and to choose books that speak to their interests and passions.

"Our goal is to spark a love of reading that will last them a lifetime, which in turn will empower them with the literacy skills they need to succeed."

