



# Luton Irish Forum Launch of Cultural Discovery Boxes Project



## PRESS RELEASE

*The changing nature of the UK and potential for tension to arise now makes it ever more pressing for us to work towards community cohesion, fostering mutual understanding within schools so that valuing difference and understanding what binds us together become part of the way pupils think and behave ... If children are to become the successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens, understanding and respecting their own and others' cultures, religions and identities is essential.*

Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup> of September marked the launch of Luton Irish Forum (LIF) Cultural Discovery Boxes Project at Stockwood Park Discovery Centre.

Following the success of LIF's Multicultural Events Project [2007], when 500 people took up the opportunity to experience another culture, the Cultural Discovery Boxes idea was born and supported by The National Lottery.

Over the last 6 months, LIF has worked with community representatives to create 10 Cultural Discovery Boxes. These Boxes are a cultural resource for schools and community groups and contain community specific materials which are user friendly, aiding a range of learning styles.

Communities that have been represented to date include Irish, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean, African and Gypsy, Traveller and Roma. LIF extends an invitation to 4 more communities that have not been represented, to get involved before the Project ends in October.

The launch provided over 300 members of the public the opportunity to view the contents of the Boxes. Community representatives from all the contributors were at hand to answer questions about their culture and to explain the contents of their box including stories, music, games, picture, recipes and objects.

Local and visiting guests included: Mayor of Houghton Regis Councillor Lynda Walmsley, Lord Bill McKenzie, Council Leader Hazel Simmons, and representatives of the Project Steering Group, the Federation of Irish Societies and local schools.

Visitors had the opportunity to view oral history recordings, and were treated to refreshments, sweet and savoury snacks of each culture. There were a number of cultural specific activities for children including: making a rainbow mobile, colour in the Gypsy, Traveller, Roma and African images and make a yarn doll.

Cultural and Educational Officer, Nicola Molloy said 'The Cultural Boxes Project' has proved very valuable in promoting cross community and agency partnership working. It is our hope that schools will have a loan of the boxes as a user friendly ways of increasing cultural awareness across Luton. I would like to thank most sincerely our Steering Group, especially Dien Luu of Luton Voices, Heather Johnston of Luton Museums and to the many volunteers that played any part in making this event materialise.

\*\*\* Ends \*\*\*

For more information on this Project or the services of Luton Irish Forum, please contact Nicola Molloy or Nolette Hanley at Luton Irish Forum on 01582 720 447/ 07934 442 861 or by email to [info@lutonirishforum.org](mailto:info@lutonirishforum.org).