



Merlin Entertainments joins global initiative to promote disability inclusion in business

First company in leisure sector to sign up to campaign

16 May 2019: Merlin Entertainments, a global leader in location-based, family entertainment, is pleased to announce today that it has become a member of The Valuable 500 – a global initiative aimed to raise awareness and unlock the business, social and economic value of people living with disabilities across the world. It is the first company in the leisure sector to join the campaign.

Merlin aims to be the attraction operator of choice for visitors with disabilities and, wherever possible, strives to create environments that are welcoming for guests. From changing facilities and quiet areas to modified rides and carer passes, accessibility is integral to the company's operations and customer service. In addition, Merlin supports Merlin's Magic Wand, a partner charity that provides memorable days out for children facing serious illness, adversity or disability.

With inclusivity already a regular agenda item for its Board, Merlin commits to a number of actions to further make its attractions inclusive to guests and employees. These include:

- Education and training for customer-facing staff in serving guests with different disabilities based on the *Welcoming Disabled Customers* guide*
- Encouraging people with disabilities to join and grow with Merlin as employees
- Integrate inclusive design in the development of new attractions to cater for both disabled and non-disabled guests
- Continue the roll out of Changing Places toilets across key attractions
- Actively review customer feedback to inform and influence innovations and adjustments at existing attractions.

Nick Varney, Chief Executive Officer, said:

“Our core purpose and driving passion is to provide magical and memorable days out for everyone, including the many guests with disabilities that visit our attractions. At Merlin we continue to make accessibility and inclusion one of our key priorities and are proud of the steps we have taken to date to create welcoming environments for both attraction visitors and our employees with disabilities.”

“By joining The Valuable 500, we want to encourage our business partners and other industry leaders to get involved and discover how different thinking and innovation can drive change to the benefit of their organisations and everyone associated with them.”

Being inclusive of customers with disabilities also has economic value. In the UK alone, the spending power of people with disabilities and their families has been estimated at £249 billion¹. For the UK leisure and hospitality sector, the total inclusive tourism market is worth over £12 billion with families having a member with a disability proven to stay longer and spend more².

#valuable is a catalyst for an inclusion revolution that exists to position disability equally on the global business leadership agenda. The Valuable 500 was established in 2018 following EY research which demonstrates that disability is only discussed by about 4% of global businesses, with an aim to unlock the value of people living with disabilities across the world.

Caroline Casey, founder of The Valuable 500, commented:

“The leisure sector is a core element within the global economy with responsibility for creating happy memories worldwide – and is a crucial industry to spread the message of inclusion. We are delighted to welcome Merlin Entertainments to The Valuable 500 cohort, as they become the first business from this sector to join the initiative and raise their voice on this vital issue.

“We are really excited to see Merlin Entertainments embracing the move towards a more inclusive society for all, and urge other businesses from the leisure sector to follow in their footsteps and put an end to ‘diversish’ behaviour.”

Ends

*Merlin is a business partner of Business Disability Forum and a sponsor of the Welcoming Disabled Customers guide which was published in April 2019

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About Merlin Entertainments plc

Merlin Entertainments plc is a global leader in location-based, family entertainment. As Europe's Number 1 and the world's second-largest visitor attraction operator, Merlin now operates over 130 attractions, 19 hotels and 7 holiday villages in 25 countries and across 4 continents. Merlin's purpose is to deliver memorable experiences to its 67 million guests around the world, through its iconic brands and multiple attraction formats, and the commitment and passion of its c.28,000 employees (peak season). See more at www.merlinentertainments.biz

Through its 'Merlin's Magic Wand' charity, Merlin provides magical experiences for children facing serious illness, disability or adversity. Over ten years, over 600,000 attraction tickets have been

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/purple-tuesday-is-the-uks-first-accessible-shopping-day>

² <https://www.barclayscorporate.com/insight-and-research/industry-expertise/unlock-the-purple-pounds.html>

issued and over 40 Merlin 'Magic Spaces' created to bring happiness to their world.

www.merlinsmagicwand.org

About #valuable

Launched by Binc, #valuable is a campaign working to ensure businesses globally recognise the value of the one billion people around the world living with a disability. #valuable believes that building a global society that recognises the value of the 1 billion people living with a disability starts with business. It's on a mission to make sure businesses across the world recognise the value of the one billion people living with a disability.

Binc was founded by social entrepreneur and activist Caroline Casey in 2015, with a mission to ignite a historic global movement for a new age of business inclusion. Binc is capitalising on Caroline Casey's 18-year track record of success engaging over 450 organisations and working with 500,000 business leaders. Binc fundamentally believes that inclusive business creates inclusive societies and is initiating a new approach to business that genuinely includes the 1 billion people living in the world with a disability. Binc is the founding team behind valuable, an ambitious global campaign to put inclusivity on top of the business agenda around the world in 2019. Binc is using a tried and tested formula that has worked in the past for gender, race and LGBT to leverage the exponential rise of The Diversity and Inclusion Agenda.