**Press Release**

**Strawberry Field is open and accessible to everyone, thanks to its Changing Places toilet facilities**

The world famous Strawberry Field, immortalised by The Beatles, has now safely re-opened post Covid-19, with new measures in place and it is open to ALL, in part because of its WCs.

Recent news has announced that large accessible toilets for severely disabled people - known as Changing Places - will be made compulsory for new buildings in England from 2021.

Strawberry Field, the Salvation Army centre in Liverpool immortalised by John Lennon, has seen the investment of £8m in the creation of an interactive visitor exhibition, café and shop, as well as a Training Hub for young adults with barriers to employment. The new centre opened in September 2019, and to ensure all visitors can make the most of their time there, a Changing Places toilet facility was included in plans and supplied and installed by Closomat.

Changing Places toilets provide more space and equipment than conventional wheelchair-accessible WCs, to meet the needs of people of all ages who need help to deal with their intimate hygiene. Closomat’s installation at Strawberry Field gives users a peninsular WC with a full room cover ceiling track hoist, height adjustable adult-sized changing bench, height adjustable washbasin, and privacy screen, in a 12m2 room.

Chris Stringer, Learning Disability Inclusion Development Manager, The Salvation Army said:

“I have been aware of and following the campaign to having more Changing Places toilets available for a couple of years. Even when space was a possible issue at Strawberry Field, the provision of a Changing Places toilet was never in doubt.”

Individuals who have been campaigning for more Changing Places facilities to be made available, particularly in northern England, are said to be "especially pleased" at the news.

Changing Places toilet facility locations can be found online by visiting <https://changingplaces.uktoiletmap.org/> and further information on Strawberry Field at <https://www.strawberryfieldliverpool.com/>

**-ENDS-**

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Salvation Army is an international Christian church and registered charity which has been transforming lives for more than 150 years. Working in 131 countries worldwide, The Salvation Army offers friendship, practical help and support for people at all levels of need. In the UK and Republic of Ireland this work includes more than 750 community churches and social centres. Registered Charity Nos. 214779, 215174 and in Scotland SC009359, SC037691. For more information visit the website www.salvationarmy.org.uk

Some 20% of the UK population is disabled. Whilst not all need the extra capability of a Changing Places, many require extra space to accommodate a large wheelchair and/or carers, and additional equipment; they may also need help to transfer to the toilet, they may need changing. Conventional wheelchair accessible toilets do not have the space or equipment they need, meaning their opportunities to spend time away from home are severely curtailed.

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FACT SHEET

Visiting Strawberry Field

· The centre is a welcome addition to Beatles tourism in the city, with responsible tourism at its heart. It is home to a brand new visitor experience, complete with visitor exhibition, café, shop and gardens, as well as a Steps to Work programme, which aims to help young adults with learning difficulties and other barriers to employment into work.

· Tickets to the visitor exhibition must be booked in advance and are currently on sale at a reduced price. More details available at www.strawberryfieldliverpool.com

· The site is a short walk away from John Lennon’s childhood home in Menlove Avenue where he lived with this Aunt Mimi.

The Salvation Army and Strawberry Field

· Strawberry Field was purchased by The Salvation Army in 1934. The organisation opened the site as a children’s home in 1936 and for nearly 70 years the site supported some of Liverpool’s most vulnerable children until it closed in 2005.

· A young John Lennon lived nearby and played in the grounds. It eventually inspired him to write the song Strawberry Fields Forever.

· The Salvation Army is a church and charity, working in 131 countries around the world, demonstrating Christian principles through practical support and friendship to people of all ages, backgrounds and needs.

The grounds and interactive exhibition

· Visitors through the exhibition learn about the site’s history and connection with The Salvation Army, including exclusive insights into the former Salvation Army children’s home, John Lennon's childhood and the writing and recording of the famous song, as told by John’s close friends and family.

· The Imagine More Café offers a tempting menu including breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea, sourced from local producers.

· The shop stocks a wide range of exclusive Strawberry Field memorabilia.

· The gardens, where John Lennon used to play as a child, offer a calm space for reflection and a place to explore spirituality.

Responsible Tourism

· Profits from the Visitor Centre help to fund the Steps to Work programme, which supports local young people, aged 18-25 with learning disabilities and other barriers to employment. The programme aims to remove barriers and support trainees into employment. The 12- 18 month employability programme includes an 8 week ‘work readiness course’ followed by 3, three month work placements with a local employer, which could include the Strawberry Field shop, visitor exhibition, café or garden. These work placements include two days a week at work and two days a week at The City of Liverpool College.

Changing Places

Zack Kerr, who has cerebral palsy and has been campaigning for three years for more Changing Places, is said to be "especially pleased" that more facilities will be available in northern England.

Potential users of a wheelchair-accessible toilet with space, bench and hoist (Changing Places) include:

- 1.5m wheelchair users

- 6.5 million people who have either bladder or bowel incontinence

-1.5million people with a learning disability

- 1.2million people living with stroke

- 62,000 amputees

- 30,000 people with cerebral palsy

- 500,000 people with acquired brain injuries

- 100,000 people with multiple sclerosis

- 70,000 people with muscular dystrophies

- 5000 people with motor neurone disease

- 8,000 people with spina bifida

- 40,000 people with spinal injuries

- 120,000 people with a stoma

- 3.8million adults morbidly obese

- 8.7million people with osteoarthritis

- 400,000 people with rheumatoid arthritis