

Monday 31st January 2005

**PRIME MINISTER TONY BLAIR AND HEALTH SECRETARY JOHN REID “TIE UP” WITH
BEATING BOWEL CANCER’S LOUD TIE CAMPAIGN, ALONGSIDE A HOST OF
CELEBRITIES, TO JOIN FIGHT AGAINST UK'S SECOND MOST DEADLY CANCER -
BOWEL CANCER**

Beating Bowel Cancer today launched its sixth Loud Tie Campaign (week of 31st January to 4th February), with support from the three main Party leaders; Prime Minister and Labour Party leader Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, Conservative Party leader Rt Hon Michael Howard MP and Liberal Democrat Party leader Rt Hon Charles Kennedy MP; Secretary of State for Health Dr John Reid MP; and a host of celebrities including TV's most famous wearer of Loud Ties Richard Whiteley OBE, Gabi Roslin and Matthew Wright.

The annual campaign encourages people across Britain to raise money for the charity by wearing a Loud Tie or wacky neckwear during the week, and to talk out Loud about bowel cancer which is the second biggest killer cancer, affecting 35,600 people every year.

On accepting a Loud Tie from Beating Bowel Cancer at their parliamentary launch of the campaign (supported by Roche), Prime Minister Tony Blair said, "I am delighted to support Beating Bowel Cancer's Loud Tie campaign. It is an imaginative and fun way of raising both awareness of bowel cancer and how the disease can be tackled. Bowel cancer remains a major killer which is why the NHS is putting new effort and resources into preventing, diagnosing and treating this disease. This includes a new screening programme together with a drive to raise awareness of its symptoms. This is where the Loud Tie campaign can play its part. We need to encourage people to talk "out loud" about bowel cancer and banish any stigma so people are not embarrassed to come forward for screening or to talk to their doctor about this disease. I urge everyone to dig out their loudest tie and support the campaign"



Beating Bowel Cancer's Chief Executive, Hilary Whittaker, added: "As well as the important fundraising that takes place during Loud Tie Week, the campaign also aims to increase the profile of this disease. Thankfully recent years have seen the development of a number of new, innovative treatments for bowel cancer and it is Beating Bowel Cancer's priority to help to ensure that these are available to patients who could benefit from them, regardless of where they live or their ability to pay."

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Richard Whiteley is perhaps the UK's most famous wearer of Loud Ties, owning over 500 in total. He commented, "I am proud to say that my 'fashionable' ties will be shouting even louder as I support the charity to help raise awareness of this campaign." Gabi Roslin, another backer of the campaign commented: "I know only too well the impact that bowel cancer can have, as my father suffered from the disease 9 years ago but is now doing really well. That's why I'm fully endorsing the campaign."

Sharon Osbourne is the most well-known celebrity bowel cancer survivor – the X-Factor Judge and wife of Ozzie was diagnosed with bowel cancer in 2002, but after surgery and chemotherapy she was luckily given the all-clear. Over 17,000 people in this country aren't so lucky - that's the number who lose their battle with bowel cancer each year.

Last year, a report was published by the National Cancer Director, Professor Mike Richards (June 14 2004, "Variations in usage of cancer drugs approved by NICE", Department of Health), which showed unacceptably high variations across the country in the uptake of cancer drugs approved by NICE, so that people living in some areas were less able to access treatments than those living in other areas. This is one of the key issues that will be focused on during Loud Tie Week, and at the Parliamentary Launch of the Campaign, and

during 2005 the charity will be closely following the progress of government recommendations to ensure that all appropriate patients have access to cancer drugs approved by NICE, as well as any new and innovative treatments for bowel cancer.

The government also recently announced that a national bowel cancer screening programme will be launched in April 2006, the first cancer screening programme in England for both men and women and one of the first of its kind in Europe.

Those interested in taking part in the Loud Tie Campaign can order a fundraising pack from Beating Bowel Cancer on 020 8892 5256 or download all materials from www.beatingbowelcancer.org. The pack contains posters, stickers, a Loud Tie Template, and a wealth of fundraising ideas for people wanting to raise money through wearing Loud Ties at work, at school, and in the community.

- ENDS –

Notes to Editors -

1. For further information, contact Beating Bowel Cancer:

Tara MacDowel (tara@beatingbowelcancer.org). Telephone: 020 8892 0171
Liz MacEwen (liz@beatingbowelcancer.org). Telephone: 020 8892 5256

2. The 2005 Loud Tie Campaign is supported by Coloplast, Roche and Merck.

3. TAKING PART IN LOUD TIE 2005: It's easy to raise money for Beating Bowel Cancer and have fun during Loud Tie Week. All people need to do is to dig out their loudest tie or wackiest piece of neckwear, and wear it with pride....and ask others to sponsor them for doing so. Full details and lots of fundraising ideas can be found in the Loud Tie Fundraising Pack, available by calling 020 8892 5256 or visiting www.beatingbowelcancer.org

4. Beating Bowel Cancer was set up in 1999 and exists to raise awareness of symptoms, promote early diagnosis and encourage open access to treatment choice for those affected by bowel cancer. For more information on the charity, and bowel cancer, visit www.beatingbowelcancer.org, call 020 8892 5256 or write to Beating Bowel Cancer, 39 Crown Road, Twickenham, TW1 3EJ. Registered charity no.1063614.

5. Bowel Cancer Statistics:

- Bowel cancer is the second biggest cancer killer in the UK – only lung cancer kills more people each year, and bowel cancer kills more people than breast cancer.ⁱ
- 35,500 people are diagnosed with the disease every year – or 95 people per day.ⁱⁱ
- Every seven days bowel cancer claims 322 lives – that is like a Jumbo Jet crashing every week.
- Yet if caught early enough it is one of the most curable cancers and 90% of lives could be saved.
- 10% of people dying from bowel cancer are under the age of 50.ⁱⁱⁱ
- 54% of patients do not present until the cancer has spread to other areas of the body, which makes treatment more difficult.^{iv}

- Statistics from a recent survey commissioned by the charity showed that 75% of people had not seen or read anything about bowel cancer in the last year, and 55% of people could not name one symptom of the disease. These statistics prove that there is a desperate need for an effective awareness campaign.^v
- Higher risk symptoms of bowel cancer include rectal bleeding, recent and persistent change of bowel habit (to looser stools or going to the toilet more often or trying to go), unexplained anaemia and recent, persistent, severe abdominal pain.^{vi}

ⁱ Cancer Research UK. CancerStats Report – Cancer Mortality. June 2002

ⁱⁱ Cancer Research UK. CancerStats Report – Cancer Incidence. June 2002

ⁱⁱⁱ Cancer Research UK. www.cancerresearchuk.org/aboutcancer/specificcancers/15437

^{iv} NHS Executive. Improving Outcomes in Colorectal Cancer The Manual 1997

^v Beating Bowel Cancer. Loud Tie Awareness Campaign Survey 2003.

^{vi} Beating Bowel Cancer. 'Don't Sit on your Symptoms' and 'Bowel Cancer: The Bottom Line' booklets