

June 2019

For Immediate Release

TOM BARTON JOINS LEPRA AS CHALLENGE AMBASSADOR

International leprosy charity, Lepra, is delighted to welcome Tom Barton as its first ever 'Challenge Ambassador'. The new ambassador will raise awareness and encourage potential fundraisers to take up challenge events to help combat the disease. Tom Barton, 45, has joined Lepra after taking part in 11 marathons and most recently, running the Test Way in memory of his father, Rex a long-time supporter of the Colchester based charity.

Tom ran the 46 mile Test Way course in 9 hours 30 minutes to celebrate what would have been Rex's 75th Birthday in May. His run raised over £2000, and he now hopes becoming a Challenge Ambassador will help to inspire others to undertake their own challenges to help the 7 million affected by the curable, yet often misunderstood disease.

"My fundraising efforts for Lepra began when I was less than 6 months old, and since then I've run 11 Marathons for Lepra. I feel privileged to be able to help knowing each pound raised is put to good use.

Having seen first-hand the devastation that this disease can cause, along with the discrimination and prejudice against people who already face difficult circumstances, I am proud to spread awareness of Lepra's work and to hopefully inspire others to undertake a challenge of their own to raise funds to help change lives.

Challenges do not have to be endurance events or tests of stamina, almost any personal challenge can become a way to raise funds and awareness. From giving up your mobile phone or social media for a period of time, or taking part in organised events like the Prudential Ride 100, Half and Full Marathons or an abseil, any challenge you can undertake can help us to beat leprosy together."

Father of two Tom, is no stranger to setting up events as he is a member of the organising committee and treasurer for the Fleet Half Marathon. He has also just passed the UK Athletics Leadership in Running Fitness (LiRF) course allowing him to coach at running clubs and externally.

Lepra CEO Geoff Prescott said,

"We are proud that Tom has joined Lepra as our first ever Challenge Ambassador. He has given so freely of his time and energy over the years to support us that we are certain he will be able to inspire others to take up their own challenges and help us towards our goal of beating leprosy."

Every day 600 men, women and children will be diagnosed with leprosy, with more than 50 of these being children. Leprosy affects millions of the most vulnerable people in the world, causing life-changing disabilities and attracting extreme prejudice and discrimination. **But there is a cure.**

Lepra works to beat leprosy in India, Bangladesh and Mozambique by finding, diagnosing and treating people affected by the disease

END

For more information please contact:

Laura Butler – Communications and Marketing Manager

laurab@lepra.org.uk -01206 216752

Notes for Editors

About Lepra and leprosy

Lepra is a UK-based international specialist charity that has been working to beat leprosy since 1924. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II became Patron of Lepra in 1952, shortly after the death of her father King George VI, who had been Lepra's Patron since the charity was founded in 1924.

Leprosy affects over 7 million of the most vulnerable people in the world, causing life-changing disabilities and attracting terrible prejudice and discrimination. **But there is a cure.**

Lepra works to beat leprosy in India, Bangladesh and Mozambique by finding, diagnosing and treating people affected by the disease. By raising awareness, pushing for early detection and supporting people living with disabilities caused by leprosy, Lepra works towards a day when this disease no longer destroys lives.

Last year, the charity reached 301,000 people through diagnosis, treatment and care. It reached a further 1.7 million people through health education and events to raise awareness of leprosy and other neglected diseases.

Find out more about Lepra on its website and social media channels:

Website: www.lepra.org.uk

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LepraUK>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LEPRAUK/>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/LEPRAHinA>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/LepraUK/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/lepra/>