

PRESS RELEASE
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Famous farmer favours farm visit!

Budding farmer and CBeebies presenter, JB Gill, once of boy band JLS, has joined school children on a visit to a farm.

On Monday 16 May, JB joined children from Holy Cross primary school, Leicester, on a visit hosted by the GWCT's Allerton Project, and organised by national education charity The Country Trust. The aim of the day was for the children to observe and learn more about how farmers can increase wildlife numbers, improve soil health and continue to provide food for a growing population.

Formerly one fourth of the boy band JLS, JB has since firmly found his feet in the farming world. JB said: "I had a fantastic time at the Allerton Project, learning about the best farming practices and how mixed farming methods are used to encourage both yield and wildlife. It was also a great opportunity to see how the educational visits are run and to offer my support, as this is something I am seeking to replicate on my own farm in Kent."

The visit brought into the focus just how important it is for urban children to gain access to food, farming and the countryside. Jill Attenborough, Chief Executive of The Country Trust said: "*The Country Trust is passionate about bringing the working countryside alive for those children least able to access it. It was evident today how visits to real working farms can provide amazing experiences which fuel children's imagination and really fire them up to learn more about the world around them.*"

JB is committed to a similar vision and, as a presenter of the CBeebies programme 'Down on the Farm', is keen to inspire children about the countryside and help them understand where their food comes from. He said: "*I think it's invaluable for children to experience our countryside. In the UK we have some of the best countryside in the world. It's such a great place for children to learn and develop - it takes some of them from inner city areas out of their comfort zone and allows them to learn with freedom and a wealth of experience that they can't really get anywhere else.*"

The Allerton Project has over 5 years of experience of delivering visits for primary school children. JB joined the first of the 2016 series of school events, during which over 200 children from across the East Midlands will be visiting the farm.

Jim Egan, GWCT's Head of Education and Development for the Allerton Project, said: "*These school events are some of the most rewarding days of my working year. It's incredible how you can cover such a large amount of the primary school curriculum in one day on a farm.*"

After the visit, JB took the opportunity to hear about the Allerton Project in more depth on a tour around the farm Dr Alastair Leake, GWCT'S Director of Policy. This gave JB the opportunity to see the huge amount of work that the Allerton Project is undertaking and how the GWCT works with global brands and farmers, offering practical advice and sharing their farmland research.

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Notes to Editors

Jonathan Benjamin "JB" Gill is an English singer and farmer who found fame on the X-Factor with boyband group JLS in 2008. Originally from Croydon in South East London, JB developed a love of music at an early age, singing in the school choir and playing a number of instruments. JB attended the Centre for Young Musicians before concentrating on a rugby career with the London Irish rugby club. However, it wasn't long before JB returned to music, taking up vocal coaching and leaving the rugby world behind. JB studied Theology at King's College London but decided to follow his dreams of becoming a successful singer and pursued a music career.

When JLS disbanded in 2013, JB invested his money from the band into farming, purchasing an eleven acre smallholding in Kent where he successfully rears Kelly Bronze turkeys, Tamworth pigs and chickens. JB is hugely passionate about educating children about the countryside, particularly those who have not been fortunate enough to have the access. One of his aims is to also encourage children to explore the outdoors, learn more about food provenance and help them understand just how vital the farming community is to the future of our countryside. Since JB's departure from the music industry, JB has been busy building a family, recently becoming a first-time father. JB is currently a presenter on CBeebies Down on the Farm and maintains that "there is no better environment for children to develop and learn."

With a series of community projects underway, including opening up his farm for public festivals and visits, JB hopes to provide greater access to the countryside for inner-city children. In creating these opportunities for young people, he also hopes to be able to teach children about where their food comes from. "It's something I'd like my children to be around and to be involved in. For me it's about utilising my blessings - everything that I've gained from the past and JLS - in this new farming environment and making sure that everyone can be a part of it."

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The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust is an independent wildlife conservation charity which carries out scientific research into Britain's game and wildlife. We advise farmers and landowners on improving wildlife habitats. We employ 22 post-doctoral scientists and 40 other research staff with expertise in areas such as birds, insects, mammals, farming and statistics. We undertake our own research as well as projects funded by contract and grant-aid from Government and private bodies. The Trust is also responsible for a number of Government Biodiversity Action Plan species and is lead partner for grey partridge and joint lead partner for brown hare and black grouse.

The GWCT's Allerton Project: The GWCT's Allerton Project is an 800 acre commercial farm business attached to a Research and Educational charitable trust. The Project was established in 1992 with the objective of demonstrating how modern efficient farming and environmental conservation can co-exist. The development of the education objectives of the Trust has expanded substantially to several thousand visitors a year including school groups, politicians and farmers, thus necessitating the construction of a larger visitor centre. The challenge of converting a disused brick cowshed into a sustainable building was given to architect Sylvester Cheung from Melton Mowbray. 60 per cent of construction costs were obtained as a grant from the Rural Development Programme for England.

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The Country Trust founded in 1978, is the leading national educational charity that brings the working countryside alive for those children least able to access it, whether through disadvantage or disability. Every year we support hundreds of volunteer farmers and landowners to welcome thousands of disadvantaged children from all backgrounds and faiths onto their farms - nearly 25,000 children in 2015. We have 3 main strands of activities:

1. Farm Discovery - day visits to real working farms
2. Countryside Discovery - residential visits to the countryside
3. Food Discovery - yearlong programmes exploring every aspect of growing, cooking and even selling food

The Country Trust currently works with schools in and around London, East Anglia, Hampshire, Birmingham and the East and West Midlands, Yorkshire, the North West, North Wales and Northumberland.

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