



## News Release

Friday June 3, 2011

### Rugby star to launch heart campaign

Residents will get the chance to meet former Leicester Tigers and England rugby ace Rory Underwood as he helps launch our local Healthy Heart campaign.

This weekend Rory Underwood M.B.E alongside city mayor Sir Peter Soulsby, will be launching the campaign at Abbey Park on Saturday June 4. Participants can register for *The Big Health Walk* at 10am at the bandstand followed by a walk to the Riverside Festival at Bede Park.

Rory chairs the Leicester Sports Partnership Trust Board which coordinates the delivery of sport and physical activity initiatives across the city. The guiding principals of the Leicester Sports Partnership Trust are to improve educational attainment, health and wellbeing.

Rory Underwood, said: "The Leicester Sports Partnership Trust fully support this great campaign and I am delighted to be attending the launch to help promote the message that being physically active reduces the risk of heart disease. The Leicester Sports Partnership Trust goal is to embed sustainable sporting and physical activity opportunities in the city to benefit future generations. Working in partnership we hope that initiatives like the Healthy Heart campaign will help make Leicester the most active city in the country."

Leicester's Healthy Heart initiative is challenging people to try and walk as many minutes as possible this summer to improve their health and fitness, and help reduce their risk of heart disease. Free t-shirts with the 'Healthy Heart' logo are also available to people on a first come, first served basis.

NHS Leicester City has joined forces with Leicester City Council and Leicester-Shire and Rutland Sport to get people started off on the right foot.

City Mayor Peter Soulsby said: "Heart problems are one of the biggest health issues in Leicester. Yet something as simple and every day as walking can do so much to restore the feeling of fitness and wellbeing. I hope as many people as possible will join me on a pleasant walk along the canal to the Riverside Festival after we launch this campaign."

Heart disease is one of the biggest causes of early death in the city. There are four simple steps to reduce the risk of heart disease:

- Give up smoking
- Eat a healthy balanced diet
- Increase physical activity
- Drink less alcohol

Deb Watson director of public health for NHS Leicester City and Leicester City Council, said: "It's fantastic such a well-known sports star is supporting the campaign and we are delighted Sir Peter Soulsby is taking part in a city walking challenge.

"Walking is the perfect activity to improve your heart health because it can be done anywhere, it's free and you don't require any special equipment. It gives people a chance to get outside, make new friends and build up their level of fitness at their own pace. The time has never been better to reduce your risk of heart disease by making changes to your lifestyle."

**For further information please contact press officer Liz Thomas on 0116 295 4123 or [liz.thomas@leicestercity.nhs.uk](mailto:liz.thomas@leicestercity.nhs.uk)**

**ENDS**

Notes to editors:

In Leicester each year there are around:

- **19,000** people with diabetes
- **17,000** people with heart disease
- **11,000** people with coronary heart disease, and
- **4,800** who suffer a stroke

**Rory Underwood** MBE (born 19 June 1963 in Middlesbrough, England) is a former English rugby union footballer who played wing for, most notably, Leicester Tigers and Bedford. He represented England and the British Lions and is a former Royal Air Force pilot. He was educated at Barnard Castle School and RAF College Cranwell. Having first laced up his rugby boots as a youngster at Middlesbrough Rugby Club (with Rob Andrew and Bernie Coyne) he went on to become one of the greatest wings in rugby union. Underwood is the leading try scorer for England in international matches.

He won 85 England and six Lions caps between 1984 and 1996, scoring a record 49 tries for England, and one for the British Lions. He played for England in the Rugby World Cups of 1987, 1991 and 1995.

In 1992 he switched from the right to the left wing to accommodate his younger brother, Tony, in the team. They were the first brothers to represent England at the same time since 1937. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest wingers to ever play the game. Many of his tries are classics and he is renowned for the ability to run as fast with the ball in hand as without.