

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Saturday, 24 March 2018**



**THE NATION SMASHES 15 BILLION STEPS AND RAISES £38,195,278 FOR SPORT RELIEF (so far...)**

This year's Sport Relief drew to a close last night, following weeks of generous fundraising, epic challenges, unmissable TV and billions of steps. The final week culminated with the Sport Relief Night of TV on BBC One, which brought the total to a fantastic £38,195,278 so far, and saw the nation join forces to beat a billion steps in a single day. The money raised will help vulnerable people across the UK, and the world, to live happier, healthier and safer lives.

Broadcast live from Media City UK in Salford for the first time, the show saw famous faces pitted against each other for Sport Relief specials. Helen Skelton, Vanessa White and Wayne Bridge were crowned champions in a nail-biting celebrity boxing battle, and BBC pipped ITV to cross the finish line on the Salford Quays for the Clash of the Channels Boat Race. Not forgetting the fancy footwork of football stars in a Strictly Come Dancing – Football Special, which saw England international and Arsenal captain Alex Scott's impressive moves wow the judges.

TV audiences were also treated to a peek into the bedroom of Sir Andy Murray as he received a rude awakening from Michael McIntyre, and John Bishop carried out a one-man mission for World Cup Victory in the 'Spirit of 66'. Some very special guests helped to take phone calls and donations, with Kylie, Stacey Solomon, Alex Jones, Claudia Winkleman and Paddy McGuinness all picking up the calls in the Sport Relief phone bank.

Presenter Davina McCall said: "Sport Relief is always a really special night and this evening, once again, we've seen the public show just how generous they are. I've been lucky to go and see the work made possible thanks to your donations in the UK as well as across the world, and I can say for sure – it makes such a difference. Thank you, thank you, to everyone who has got active and supported Sport Relief this year."

This year, for the first time ever, every corner of the UK was home to a Sport Relief challenge as the great British public were called upon to join Team Sport Relief and take on the Nation's Billion Steps Challenge. The country took on the charge with people from all four nations, sports clubs, schools,

famous faces and even the residents of Ambridge (home to BBC Radio 4's The Archers) downloading the brand-new Sport Relief app to track their steps and smash over 15 billion steps throughout this year's fundraiser. More than 10,000 schools, nurseries and youth groups around the country got involved, with children of all ages clocking up the miles in weird and wonderful ways, and on track to raise more than £4 million.

Liz Warner, Chief Executive of Comic Relief, said: "We are as ever humbled by the generosity of the British public, and want to thank every single person who supported Sport Relief this year. We will spend the money with our partners here in the UK and around the world to help people tackle some of the toughest circumstances imaginable.

"I also want to say thank you to the brave people who took on challenges this year, not only for putting their bodies on the line but also for putting so much of their personal experience of mental and maternal health out there. The inspiring way the public has responded by sharing their own stories and throwing their support behind the challenges makes us determined to do even more to make sure the purpose is front and centre in all we do."

A group of determined celebrity challengers led the charge by taking on some of the toughest conditions in the history of Sport Relief, and getting the nation talking about important issues along the way. From the mental health-inspired challenges taken on by presenter Zoe Ball and Radio 1's Greg James; to The One Show's Alex Jones joining a team of mums to share their maternal health experiences while putting themselves through punishing physical encounters; to Welsh rugby legend Gareth Thomas and Scottish funny man Des Clarke facing their deepest fears to raise money for Sport Relief – this year's challenge line-up got the nation talking about the issues in a way we have never seen before.

As ever, Sport Relief would not have been possible without the support of some of the UK's biggest household names. The impressive total includes a generous contribution of over £6 million, raised by Sainsbury's colleagues and customers who got active and raised money by selling the must-have merchandise, including the official Sport Relief t-shirt. Through its 'Flying Start' partnership, British Airways has raised over £3 million this Sport Relief from money donated by customers on board, as well as from staff fundraising events. Long-term supporters BT sponsored Zoe Ball's challenge and got colleagues stepping, donating £357,000 so far.

The money raised this Sport Relief will enable Comic Relief to support vulnerable people in the UK and across the world to live happier, healthier and safer lives. This will build on the progress that Comic Relief has helped to make happen thanks to the public's enduring support, including:

- Having helped **12 million** people across Africa through funding projects tackling malaria
- Currently funding **149 projects** that support people with mental health problems in the UK, to the sum of more than **£23.6 million**

- Having helped **over 7 million people** across Africa through maternal, neonatal and child health funding since Comic Relief began

None of this would have been possible without the incredible efforts of the great British public – thank-you.

**Ends**

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT**

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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

##### **About this year's celebrity challenges:**

With plenty of tears along a 352-mile cycle, presenter Zoe Ball shared her poignant personal story, including her motivation to take on the challenge and raise awareness of mental health issues. Her heroic efforts raised an unbelievable £1,198,012 on her BT Sport Relief Challenge: Zoe's Hardest Road Home, which included a donation of £350,000 from long-term Sport Relief challenge sponsor, BT.

After being temporarily stopped in his tracks by the Beast from the East – a snowstorm that shut down the nation – DJ and presenter Greg James triumphantly completed the UK's three highest peaks, plus 500 miles on a bike in the Radio 1 Gregathlon: Pedal to the Peaks, raising £1,090,522 and inspiring listeners and DJs alike to open up about their own mental health problems.

The One Show's Alex Jones and her team of inspirational mums faced tears, tumbles and trials to complete five bruising tests in The Mother of All Challenges, raising an incredible £799,991, as well as awareness of maternal health, inspired by their own experiences.

For the first time, Scotland and Wales hosted their own challenges which saw Welsh rugby hero, Gareth Thomas, conquer his fear of heights to take on a tandem skydive with an inspiring team of older people recruited from the four corners of Wales. Meanwhile, Scottish funny-man and radio presenter Des Clarke faced his own fears of swimming, cycling and driving in a series of daring 'TRY'-Athlons across the nation.

BBC Two's hour-long programme, *Famously Unfit... for Sport Relief* saw four well-known faces push themselves to the limit as they embarked on a mission to regain their fitness and inspire the great British public to get active and do their part for Sport Relief. Following Les Dennis, Susannah Constantine, Miles Jupp and Tameka Empson on their ten-week journey, the show culminated in one of the UK's hardest and most demanding physical challenges with the four celebrities tackling a muddy and exhausting obstacle course in freezing temperatures.

**Sport Relief's partners this year contributed:**

- Albert Bartlett - £180,046
- British Airways - £3,023,922
- BT - £357,000 so far
- EE - £65,602
- England Rugby - £1,017, 681
- GSK - £100,000
- NFL - £70,231
- Premier League - £1,600,000
- Sainsbury's - £6,104,631
- Voltarol - £100,000

**ABOUT SPORT RELIEF**

Sport Relief brings the nation together to get active, raise money and change lives. Since 2002, Sport Relief has raised over £335 million. The money raised by the public will be spent by Comic Relief to tackle the critical issues affecting people across the UK and the world. This year, Sport Relief culminates in a week of activity from Saturday 17th to Friday 23rd March, leading to an unmissable night of TV on the BBC.

**ABOUT COMIC RELIEF**

Comic Relief is a UK charity which aims to create a just world, free from poverty - where everyone is safe, healthy, educated and empowered. Since 1985, Comic Relief has raised over £1 billion. That money has helped, and is helping, people both at home in the UK and across the world. For information about Comic Relief and the work it carries out, please visit [www.comicrelief.com](http://www.comicrelief.com) Comic Relief, registered charity 326568 (England/Wales); SC039730 (Scotland)