



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **SINDEN BECOMES PATRON OF WORLD CLASS STRATFORD**

Sir Donald Sinden, one of the most distinguished British actors of the post-war generation, has agreed to be Patron of the multi-million pound World Class Stratford initiative, the project that aims to revitalise Stratford-upon-Avon and boost its image as an international cultural and tourism destination.

The actor – who first performed on stage in Stratford in 1946 – is also this year’s President of the Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations and will be Master of Ceremonies at the Shakespeare Birthday Lunch on the banks of the River Avon in April.

“I am totally in favour of World Class Stratford,” said Sir Donald. “I do know the place pretty well!”

Councillor Les Topham, chairman of the World Class Stratford Strategy Group and leader of Stratford-on-Avon District Council, said: “I am thrilled that Sir Donald has agreed to become a Patron of World Class Stratford. His associations with the town go back many years and his loyalty to Stratford and all it represents are second to none. It is a great honour to the whole of Stratford that he has decided to support our ambitious initiative in this way.”

Renowned for his rich, fruity voice, Sir Donald has been a household name for 56 years through his prolific work in theatre, films, television and radio. He and his late wife Diana, who died in 2004, were young actors in Stratford in the late 1940s. They married in 1948 and had two sons, Jeremy and Marc, who both became actors.

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Some indication of Sir Donald's affection for Stratford can be gauged from the regularity with which he attends the annual Shakespeare Birthday Lunch in the town. He always dresses for the occasion in top hat and tails and this year has written to around 20 other men he knows who will be attending the event, asking them to do the same.

"This is a very important occasion – celebrating the birthday of Shakespeare – and I believe that people should dress properly for it," he said.

Sir Donald believes the World Class Stratford initiative presents a golden opportunity to make major improvements to the town in a co-ordinated way. "In the past there have been too many people with individual interests," he said. "Now we must all pull together for a long term policy rather than do things in a piecemeal way."

He is particularly concerned about traffic in Stratford. "Something has to be done to stop the traffic coming over Clopton Bridge," he said. "But it is no good closing off streets to traffic unless you are giving the traffic somewhere else to go. Would it be a good idea if we had those superb electric buses going through the town every 10 minutes so tourists and people coming to work – who've parked their cars at park-and-ride – can move around the town unimpeded?"

Sir Donald believes it is crucial that all the plans for the town being developed by World Class Stratford "take account of the possibility – the possibility - that Stratford will have a ring road at some time in the future".

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