

**Florida Announcement****15/01/10**

**Merlin Entertainments Group to open LEGOLAND® Florida**  
*Merlin Entertainments Purchases Cypress Gardens*

**Polk County, FL (January 21<sup>st</sup> 2010)**

Merlin Entertainments (“Merlin”), Europe’s No 1 and the world’s second largest visitor attraction operator, announced today a multi-million dollar investment in the biggest family tourist centre in the world with the planned opening of LEGOLAND® Florida.

Merlin has purchased the historical Cypress Gardens in Winter Haven Florida from property investment company Land South Group and will open LEGOLAND Florida on the site at the end of 2011. The deal to buy the 145-acre site includes the freehold on the current theme park and waterpark as well as an operating lease in perpetuity on the historic botanical gardens. Merlin plans a significant multi-million dollar investment over a number of years, up to and beyond opening, in what will be the biggest LEGOLAND to date. In line with the group’s “resort” strategy for its theme parks this is likely to include both accommodation and the addition of further branded attractions from the Merlin portfolio. This will build on the \$100m invested over the last few years in improved infrastructure on the site.

**A proven concept**

The Florida development will be Merlin’s second LEGOLAND Park in North America and will play an important role in the group’s continued growth in the US. It will provide a full-day, year round, theme park experience geared towards families with children between the ages of two and 12. Its design will mirror the successful concept of the four existing LEGOLAND Parks in Denmark, Germany, UK and California. However, as with the other four, it will also have its own unique “twist” reflecting its stunning location and adding a Florida flavour.

The decision to open a LEGOLAND Park in Florida follows considerable research in the area by Merlin over a number of years. This indicated a high recognition of the LEGOLAND Park brand and a 90%+ intention to visit by families in this target market. The issue therefore has been to find the ideal site. Cypress Gardens has long been a popular location for millions of visitors. Merlin believes its central Florida location, approx 30 minutes from Orlando and also close to Tampa, is the perfect site for a leisure brand as powerful and compelling as LEGOLAND.

The development follows the outstanding success of LEGOLAND® California which opened in 1999. LEGOLAND California was recently voted the country’s best children’s theme park by *Amusement Today* for the sixth year

running. It is also recognised as the fastest growing theme park in the US, enjoying an increase in visitor numbers year-on-year, including 6% in 2009.

LEGOLAND Florida will be the biggest LEGOLAND Park ever opened and will offer a unique mix of more than 50 rides, shows and attractions, including spectacular LEGO models and other interactive elements for the whole family to enjoy together.

The Park is expected to create more than 1,000 new jobs by opening; as well as boosting the Florida economy through the use of local contractors for development.

**Nick Varney**, Chief Executive of Merlin Entertainments, said:

“LEGOLAND Florida will be one of the most exciting and important projects Merlin has ever developed. It is a unique opportunity for us; Florida is the biggest family tourist centre in the world. We have been looking for the right site there for some time and in Winter Haven we plan to create one of the best and certainly most beautiful, theme parks in the world. LEGOLAND California has already proven how much US families love the unique LEGOLAND concept. Now we are bringing that fun and experience to a much wider audience - the millions of US and international visitors who come to Florida every year.”

**John Jakobsen**, Managing Director of Merlin’s LEGOLAND Parks Operating Group, said:

“LEGOLAND Parks are based on the universally popular LEGO Toy products and offer families the opportunity to let their imaginations run free and become completely involved in LEGO Experiences. A LEGOLAND Park is the ultimate platform to showcase the LEGO Values and the endless possibilities of the LEGO idea. LEGOLAND Florida will add a completely unique, exciting dimension and experience for families visiting the area.”

**Charlie Crist**, Florida Governor, said:

“We are delighted at this news. We are extremely happy that the future of Cypress Gardens is secure. LEGOLAND is one of the most exciting names in family attractions and a welcome new addition to Florida.”

**Bob English**, Chairman of Polk County Commissioners, said:

“We are looking forward to working closely with Merlin. Their record speaks for itself. All of us at both local and State level really welcome their exciting plans for the site, the jobs this project will create and their commitment to the County long term.”

Merlin Entertainments is firmly establishing itself in the important US market. When it opens, LEGOLAND Florida will be the company’s thirteenth attraction here. It joins LEGOLAND California; SEA LIFE Carlsbad; Madame Tussauds – New York, Hollywood, Las Vegas and Washington, D.C.; LEGOLAND Discovery Center Chicago; and the Underwater Adventures Aquarium in

Minneapolis, all of which are already successfully operating. Four more attractions are also in development - SEA LIFE Phoenix; LEGOLAND Discovery Centres in Dallas Fort Worth and New Jersey and the Pepsi Globe observation wheel in New Jersey.

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For further information please contact:

**For Merlin Entertainments:**

Sally Ann Wilkinson/Penny Roberts  
Tel: ++ 44 20 8899 6110 / ++ 4420 8948 4225  
Mobile: ++44 7774 415372/ ++ 447887 542490  
Home: ++ 44 20 8948 3725 (Sally Ann Wilkinson)  
Email: [saw@thefirmcomms.com](mailto:saw@thefirmcomms.com)  
[par@thefirmcomms.com](mailto:par@thefirmcomms.com)

Julie Estrada  
US Media Merlin Entertainments  
Mobile: 00.1.760.846.0886  
Email: [usmedia@merlinentertainments.biz](mailto:usmedia@merlinentertainments.biz)

Susanna Voyle/David Allchurch  
Tulchan Communications  
Tel : ++ 44 20 7353 4200

Mob : ++ 44 7980 894 557  
Email : [svoyle@tulchangroup.com](mailto:svoyle@tulchangroup.com)

**For Land South Group :**

Brian Philpot

Tel : +1 863 6079500  
Mob: – Cell +1 863 6989151.

**Notes to Editors**

**About Merlin Entertainments Group**

**MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS GROUP** is the leading name in location based, family entertainment, and has seen the most successful and dynamic growth of any company in the sector over the last five years. Europe's No 1, and the world's No 2 visitor attraction operator, Merlin has 60 attractions and six hotels/two holiday villages in 13 countries and across 3 continents. The company aims to deliver memorable and rewarding experiences to its 38 million visitors worldwide, through its iconic global and local brands, and the commitment and passion of its managers and 13,500 employees. Merlin Entertainments operates the following attractions – SEA LIFE, Madame Tussauds, LEGOLAND, The Merlin Entertainments London Eye, Dungeons, Gardaland, LEGOLAND Discovery Centres, Alton Towers Resort, Warwick Castle, Thorpe Park, Chessington World of Adventures, Underwater Adventures, Heide Park and Earth Explorer.

For more information on Merlin, please visit [www.merlinentertainments.biz](http://www.merlinentertainments.biz)

## **About LEGOLAND**

LEGOLAND® is a brand of interactive theme parks dedicated to families with children between the ages of 2 and 12. Each Park features more than 50 rides, shows and attractions geared towards interactive family fun. There are four LEGOLAND Parks in the world – LEGOLAND Billund in Denmark, LEGOLAND Windsor outside of London, LEGOLAND California in the U.S. and LEGOLAND Deutschland near Günzburg, Bavaria Germany. A fifth is under development in Malaysia and due to open in 2012. The LEGOLAND theme parks are a part of Merlin Entertainments Group. For the most current information, visit [www.LEGOLAND.com](http://www.LEGOLAND.com).

## **About Land South Group**

The **Land South Group** specializes in real estate investment across the southeastern United States. **Land South** has purchased over 320,000 acres of real estate in the southeast comprising of timberland, commercial property, residential property, industrial land, and agricultural land. **Land South's** other businesses include asset based lending through Bankers South, LLC, and carbon offset creation and investment through Southeastern Carbon Solutions, LLC. **Land South's** professionals bring over 88 years of combined practice in the real estate industry. For more current information regarding **Land South** visit [www.landsouthgroup.com](http://www.landsouthgroup.com).

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