**Olympic Medallist Tom Daley Comes Second in Languages Competition**

Olympic diver Tom Daley went head to head with fellow students on Wednesday to compete in the regional final of the Routes into Languages South West MFL Speaking Competition in Exeter. Taking time out from his training schedule for the forthcoming World Championship in Barcelona next month, Tom delivered his inspiring presentation in excellent Spanish via live video link to an audience of 120 secondary students, teachers, parents and panel of judges.

On 26th June, Routes South West held its third annual Celebration of Languages at the University of Exeter bringing together the winners from three local finals of the MFL Speaking Competition and the shortlisted entrants in the 2013 Pop Video Competition.

The Speaking Competition challenges secondary school students from across the South West to demonstrate their language skills. By combining foreign language and presentation skills they engage a large audience of their peers, teachers and panel of judges by using various creative techniques that include drama productions, comedy and music.

It was this unique opportunity for young people to demonstrate their lingual abilities in a competitive but fun format that inspired Tom Daley to participate this year. After successfully winning first prize in the local final held in Barnstaple, Devon last March, he went to great lengths to ensure he took part in the grand final. Hooking up to a borrowed laptop, Tom beamed into the lecture theatre at the University of Exeter and delivered his presentation live from Mallorca.

“I do all my interviews in Spanish, all my media in Spanish, I do lots of translations for Press Conferences when I am away as well”. Addressing the audience, Tom expressed why he believes it is important for young people to learn a language, “It does come in handy a lot for what I do and I think for anyone really, learning a language is one of the best things you could possibly do.”

But even a top athlete like Tom cannot guarantee to win everything. With her wonderful presentation in Spanish, Ingrid Counsell from Chew Valley School, Wiltshire took first prize with Tom taking second place.

The Celebration Event on Wednesday also featured the Pop Video Competition, which invites entrants to produce an original pop video song in a foreign language of their choice. Each entry is posted on the Routes South West YouTube channel and is open to the general public to vote for their favourite. The winner takes the much coveted “Online Viewers Award”.

Passions rose in the final few weeks of this year’s competition which saw an unprecedented 17,279 views on the YouTube channel and a staggering 7,070 votes cast.

“The success of the event is due to the passion and dedication of secondary school students across the South West who have embraced the two competitions. And what was special this year is the participation of such a successful role model as Tom Daley in our MFL Speaking Competition. It was so important to Tom to be a part of our celebration of languages that he set up a live link between his very strict training regimes for the World Championship in July”, said Irene Wilkie, Routes into Languages project director for the South West.

Although the two competitions are different in format, students are encouraged to exercise their lingual skills and to be creative and entertaining. Every secondary school and sixth form college across the region are invited to participate.

To view the presentations of the regional Speaking Competition winners and the winning Pop Video clips, please visit Routes into Languages South West YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/RiLSouthWest>