

**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
29 March 2012 - NORWICH**

£3m backing for Norwich's International Centre for Writing

Writers' Centre Norwich today received first stage backing from Arts Council England's Capital Investment Programme funds to develop the International Centre for Writing (ICW) in partnership with Norwich City Council, University of East Anglia and Norfolk County Council.

This exciting new centre represents a leap forward for the literary arts and the grant is one of the largest ever awarded to a literature organisation.

As the public flagship of Norwich's bid to be England's first UNESCO City of Literature, the ICW will be a world leading centre for creative writing and the best in world literature.

It will inspire writers, readers and communities by supporting the development of and improving access to the best in world literature, nurturing outstanding writing talent and demonstrating that reading and writing really can transform the lives of individuals and communities in the UK and internationally.

Norwich City Council, a key stakeholder in the project, has granted the ICW a long-term lease on Gladstone House, a Grade 2 listed, 18th century Georgian house in St Giles Street, Norwich, as a demonstration of the city's support for the ICW and its recognition that culture is a central part of the city's identity.

The Centre will be home to writers' spaces, teaching, conference, event, office spaces, a café and a basement performance space in the main house. There will also be two apartments for writers and translators in residence on the upper floors of the annexe and a 120-seat events space. As well as being a physical space, the International Centre for Writing will broker discussions on key issues facing writers, readers and the literature sector, and will be supported by a major new national digital platform due to be launched in 2014.

Writers' Centre Norwich aims to open the International Centre for Writing in April 2016.

The total campaign target is £7,000,000, with further funds being sought from a range of public and private sources. The Arts Council funding will be released in two tranches: an initial £340,000 development grant in April, and the balance of the £3,000,000 bid when Writers' Centre Norwich and its partners have developed the plans to the next stage and have put in place the final funding sources needed.

Chris Gribble, Chief Executive of Writers' Centre Norwich said:

"We are delighted to have been offered this important grant from Arts Council England today and see it as great endorsement of a project which marks a shift in ambition and capacity for the non-commercial literature sector, at a time when literature as a sector is undergoing huge change. Literature is our national art form and this award demonstrates belief in a remarkable partnership dedicated to exploring the social and artistic power of creative writing and reading. It is great news for readers and writers nationally and internationally, and for Norwich too."

Graham Creelman, Chair of Writers' Centre Norwich said:

"As home of the world's most prestigious Creative Writing MA and the British Centre for Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia, the partnership behind the ICW is well

positioned to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities opened up by this offer of support from Arts Council England. Writers' Centre Norwich is in the final stages of leading the city's bid to be England's first UNESCO City of Literature, and with the support of key businesses, local government and our partners at UEA this will mean new jobs, more investment and a national and international profile for Norwich."

Laura McGillivray, Chief Executive of Norwich City Council said:

"This significant investment is great news for Norwich and we are absolutely delighted to be working in partnership with Writers' Centre Norwich to help make this happen.

"The International Centre for Writing will be a major addition to the life of the city and cement our reputation as a city of culture."

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Writers' Centre Norwich seeks to lead on the exploration of the artistic and social power of creative writing through pioneering and collaborative projects with writers and other partners, regionally, nationally and internationally.

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Notes

FAQ

- Who are the partners?

The International Centre for Writing is led by Writers' Centre Norwich. Its key partners and stakeholders are Arts Council England, University of East Anglia, Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council.

- When will the ICW open?

The planned opening date is April 2016.

- How much will it cost?

The campaign total to realise the ICW ambitions is £7 million. We are already over half way to that total and will commence the public phase of our campaign in early 2013.

- Why Norwich?

Writers' Centre Norwich, UEA and its partners are forging a new compact for literature between the arts, higher education and the private sector. A unique partnership supported

by a city with an immense literary history and a City and County Council convinced of the civic, social and economic value of culture for all those who live in, work in and visit the city and county.

- What is a UNESCO City of Literature?

The Creative Cities Network was launched by UNESCO in October 2004. It aims to enhance the creative, social and economic potential of cultural industries and promote UNESCO's goals of cultural diversity. The network is structured around seven themes which are chosen by the cities according to their strengths and preference for a specific creative industry sector to which they devote their talent and energy. The seven themes are: Literature, Cinema, Music, Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Gastronomy and Media Arts .

Norwich is in the final stages of a bid to be England's first City of Literature; a bid which is supported by key public and private organisations from the city and county. The bid has been submitted to the UNESCO committee and a decision is expected in May 2012. There are currently five cities of Literature in the world: Edinburgh, Dublin, Melbourne, Reykjavik and Iowa City.

The application for Norwich to become a UNESCO City of Literature is a genuine bid to promote a unique city region with a sensational literary past and glittering literary future, from the first battlefield dispatch (1075) to the first woman published in English (Julian of Norwich – C15th), the first recognisable novel (C16th), the first blank verse (C16th), the first printed plan of an English city (C16th), the first published parliamentary debates (Luke Hansard – C18th), the largest concentration of published dissenters, revolutionaries and social reformers (C18th /19th) including Tom Paine and the 30 million bestseller, Anna Sewall; the first provincial library (1608), first municipality to adopt the Library Act (1850), first provincial newspaper (1701), first British MA in creative writing (the first student of the first MA was Ian McEwan (1971)), the UK's first City of Refuge (2006) for persecuted writers and a founding member of the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) and to cap it all, the Norfolk & Norwich Millennium Library (C21st) has the highest number of visitors and users in the UK – by far. And that's to leave out an extraordinary roll-call of great writers, publishers, printers and innovators – as many today as in the past – where literature really has been a force for positive change.

Find out more at www.writerscentrenorwich.org.uk

Arts Council England

The University of East Anglia

The University of East Anglia (UEA) is an internationally renowned university based in a campus that provides top quality academic, social and cultural facilities to over 14,000 students. The Creative Writing MA at UEA was the first of its kind in the country. Among its graduates are Kazuo Ishiguro, Anne Enright, Tash Aw, Tracy Chevalier and Adam Foulds. Tutors on the course have included former poet laureate Andrew Motion, Rose Tremain, WG Sebald, Patricia Duncker and Angela Carter. Current tutors include Giles Foden, Lavinia Greenlaw, George Szirtes, Trezza Azzopardi and Amit Chaudhuri.

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Norwich City Council

Norwich City Council is the local authority for the city of Norwich. For any general communications enquiries, contact communications manager Richard Balls on 01603 212991 or email richardballs@norwich.gov.uk

Norfolk County Council

Norfolk County Council is the local authority for Norfolk. We provide a wide range of services for people who live, work, do business or visit here. They include children's services such as schools, adult social services, highway maintenance, waste disposal, libraries, museums, fire and rescue, economic development and trading standards.

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