

## WRITERS' CENTRE NORWICH MOVES TO DRAGON HALL

The future of Dragon Hall as a cultural and heritage venue for the city is assured as Writers' Centre Norwich (WCN) moves into the Grade I listed building. WCN has ambitious plans to develop a National Centre for Writing in the spectacular medieval building which, in the coming years, will provide a major new cultural venue for the city and contribute to the vibrancy of the King St area.

Chris Gribble, CEO of WCN says:

“We will offer a year-round programme of regular events ensuring this much-loved building continues as a public space for Norwich residents to enjoy. It will attract writers and audiences from outside the region contributing to the local economy and the reputation of Norwich as a cultural tourism destination.”

WCN's custodianship of the building follows an independent consultation led by the previous tenant, Norfolk and Norwich Heritage Trust, Norwich City Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund after which it was agreed that best way forward to ensure the maintenance and development of the building as a publicly accessible venue was to find an arts organisation to take on the site.

The summer represents a period of transition where the Writers' Centre and partners will confirm how to use the building to best advantage, ensuring it provides regular access through a range of activities. Dragon Hall will be open in September as part of the Heritage Open Days, where the team of experienced Dragon Hall Heritage Volunteer will provide tours. It is anticipated these will continue throughout the year to guarantee all can experience the historical richness of the building which dates back to the fourteenth century.

Helen Dawson, Chair of the Norfolk and Norwich Heritage Trust says:

“This is a new chapter for Dragon Hall. Over the last twenty-five years the building has undergone significant restoration under the stewardship of the NNHT with local and national support. It is reassuring for all of us who've come to love Dragon Hall to know it will continue as a place for Norwich residents to enjoy as well attracting new visitors through WCN's exciting plans”.

Graham Creelman, WCN Chair and former Lord Mayor of Norwich, says:

“Dragon Hall is a physical presence for Norwich’s status as England's only UNESCO World City of Literature. This wonderful building will help the Writers’ Centre attract national and international investment. It will also draw visitors to the city which will help local restaurants, shops, hotels and other businesses. Dragon Hall is set to be a major part of Norwich’s cultural offering”.

In the run-up to the 2017 opening as a National Centre for Writing, the organisation will continue its fund-raising campaign in order to develop the already approved South Wing as an education space. Funding is also sought for renovation work on the building’s infrastructure to secure Dragon Hall’s long term future for the city, its residents and visitors.

## **/ENDS**

For further information and photographs please contact

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## **/NOTES**

### **Writers’ Centre Norwich**

Writers’ Centre Norwich is the literature development agency for the East and led the successful bid to have Norwich nominated as England’s first (and only) UNESCO City of Literature, one of just eleven in the world. WCN supports emerging and established writers and seeks to explore the artistic and social power of creative writing through pioneering and collaborative projects with writers, readers, schools, libraries and cultural partners. Its programme includes mentoring, workshops, conferences, live literature events and talks by internationally acclaimed writers. Speakers at WCN events in recent years have included Margaret Atwood, Jeanette Winterson and JM Coetzee.

### **The Norfolk and Norwich Heritage Trust**

The Norfolk and Norwich Heritage Trust was established in 1987 to conserve and care for Dragon Hall and to promote the use of the building for educational purposes. After an independent consultant report, the Trust decided that the long-term future of the building required a new tenant. The Writers’ Centre took over the lease of Dragon Hall on April 1 2015.

### **Dragon Hall**

Dragon Hall is a unique, Grade 1 listed medieval trading hall dating from around 1430, renowned for its spectacular timber crown-post roof and intricately carved and painted dragon.. For centuries the original timber roof and vast Great Hall were lost, concealed within an everyday terrace of houses and shops. Today, the Great Hall has been restored to its original splendour, telling the remarkable story of Robert Toppes, medieval trade and civic life in fifteenth century Norwich. The building is owned by Norwich City Council and from April 1 2015 will be leased to Writers Centre Norwich.