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FIRST YOUNG NORFOLK LAUREATE ANNOUNCED

The winners of the Young Norfolk Writing Competition were announced at a special ceremony at Norwich Arts Centre this month.

Joe Webb from City of Norwich Sixth Form was announced as the first Young Norfolk Laureate for the creative potential shown in his poem, *Peripheral Vision*.

He said: 'I thought my poem would be too different and too personal to win. I really enjoy writing and am interested in spoken word poetry. It was really unexpected and it's really cool to win.'

The head judge – poet, screenwriter and playwright Nick Drake – chose the laureate independently from a selection of anonymous entries.

The Young Norfolk Laureate will undertake an ambassadorial role for young writers in Norwich – England's first UNESCO City of Literature – and across the region.

From over 150 applications, a further five winners were chosen:

- Amelia Platt from Litcham School for 'The Suffocating Rainforest'
- Anoushka Apelian from City Academy for 'I can't write love poems anymore'
- Barez Suliman from Open Academy for 'End of the World'
- Ellen Flower from Taverham Sixth Form for 'On the unaccountable nature of things'
- Anna Wasse from Norwich High School for Girls for 'De Profundis...Phoenix Resurgit'

As part of their prize, all six winners took part in a workshop with Matt Windle – aka the poet with punch – and received goody bags and certificates, with their work published on the Writers' Centre Norwich website. They will also have the opportunity to take part in the UNESCO Young Ambassadors scheme run by Writers' Centre Norwich or the National Saturday Club.

The Young Norfolk Laureate will receive three poetry mentoring sessions as well as the opportunity to perform his work at three events over the coming year, including the launch of the Young Norfolk Arts Festival in 2018.

Participation and Learning Manager at Writers' Centre Norwich, Sophie Scott-Brown, said: 'It is a pleasure to see Joe Webb named as the first Young Norfolk Laureate. This award is about recognising courage and potential as much as technical brilliance. Joe's poem, *Peripheral Vision*, impressed judges with its brutal honesty and raw emotion.

'Joe is a deserving winner, but what has become very clear in running this competition is the astonishing amount of creative energy to be found amongst so many young people in our region – something we should all be celebrating and working to encourage.'

Norfolk County Council Adviser for 14-19 Development Robert Rickard said: 'It is fantastic to see this competition growing in popularity – this year we had more than 150 entries, which shows that young people are excited about combining their ideas with stretching themselves intellectually.'

‘Creative writing gives people a way to express themselves, to be imaginative and feel inspired. In Norfolk we strive to offer easy access to the many opportunities for young people to enjoy a well-rounded education. Qualifications matter, but also experiences – some of them way beyond the classroom – that build the skills employers and universities require. Competitions like this are a wonderful example of that.’

Director of Young Norfolk Arts, Lucy Farrant, said: ‘The Young Norfolk Writing Competition and showcase epitomise everything that Young Norfolk Arts stands for. It encourages and nurtures creativity in the County's young people and gives both them and the community as a whole the opportunity to celebrate that talent. All six winners are excellent writers and I hope they are suitably encouraged by this accolade.’

The Young Norfolk Writing Competition, now in its second year, is a partnership between Norfolk County Council, Writers’ Centre Norwich and the Young Norfolk Arts Festival.

The winning entries are available to read online at www.writerscentrenorwich.org.uk

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Notes to Editors:

1. Writers’ Centre Norwich (WCN)

WCN is a literature development organisation based in Norwich, England’s first UNESCO City of Literature. WCN is interested in both the artistic and social impact of creative writing, and works with writers, readers and diverse communities on a wide range of ongoing and one-off projects and events. Writers’ Centre Norwich is currently developing the National Centre for Writing at Dragon Hall to open in 2018 as a major cultural venue for the city. www.writerscentrenorwich.org.uk

2. Young Norfolk Arts Festival (YNAF)

Young Norfolk Arts Trust celebrates and nurtures the creativity of young people in Norfolk through the delivery of an exciting programme of year-round opportunities and the delivery of the annual Young Norfolk Arts Festival - a multi-artform spectacle of performance and participation which takes place at the end of the academic year. www.ynaf.org.uk

3. Press enquiries to Alice Kent at alice.kent@writerscentrenorwich.org.uk / 01603 877177

4. The Young Norfolk Writing Competition is a partnership between Norfolk County Council, Writers’ Centre Norwich and the Young Norfolk Arts Festival.