

## **Norwich and Nottingham UNESCO Cities of Literature issue rallying cry for cultural co-operation ahead of next week's UNESCO Cities of Literature Summit**

*Cultural leaders from 27 cities across 5 continents will arrive in Norwich for the network's first meeting in England*

**Norwich and Nottingham UNESCO Cities of Literature have called for the global cultural sector to pull together amid political tensions and uncertainty.** Ahead of the network's first meeting in England, Chris Gribble and Sandeep Mahal argue for literature to be used as a catalyst for building bridges, for bringing about greater community cohesion, and for fostering empathy, understanding and tolerance.

*"Literature can't move mountains, but it can galvanise social progress,"* said the heads of the two Cities of Literature. *"We need culture and we need literature and a good political policy to demonstrate what a cultured, civilised society can do; what a cultured, civilised society can be. It's what we, the UNESCO Cities of Literature, are about."*

For the first time, the global network of UNESCO Cities of Literature will hold its annual summit in England. Representatives from 27 cities – from Baghdad and Barcelona to Melbourne and Milan – will visit Norwich and Nottingham, splitting their time between the two cities for a week-long UNESCO Cities of Literature Forum, running 20-24 May 2019.

At the summit, the network will share examples of the year's successes, plan future projects, and consider new applications to the group. Topics high on the agenda will be international exchanges and residencies and how to promote books in translation. The programme includes an evening with prize-winning Scottish novelist **Ali Smith** and this year's UNESCO 2019 Lecture, delivered by **Robert Macfarlane**.

**Chris Gribble, Norwich City of Literature and CEO of the National Centre for Writing, said:** *We are delighted to welcome the network to Norwich and showcase the city's outstanding cultural offer as a world leader in literary excellence. The National Commission for UNESCO estimates that the UK's Creative Cities generate an additional £2.4 million per year through their association with UNESCO. It is with the help of these vibrant partnerships that we remain resilient in a changing world. The Cities of Literature Network has emerged as a powerful force advocating the importance of culture and creativity in driving regeneration and tourism, creating jobs, and making people healthier and happier. We look forward to working with the group as we plan for the year ahead."*

**Sandeep Mahal, Nottingham City of Literature, said:** *"We've identified priority areas for development to improve mobility of writers, commit to translation projects and collaborate together on books fairs and festivals but to also conceive solutions to common challenges such as improving literacy and social mobility and promoting gender equality."*

The UNESCO Cities of Literature network brings together 28 cities with a combined population of over 26 million including 1250 libraries, 130 literary festivals and over 1200 bookshops. The designation recognises excellence, placing an obligation on cities to nurture their artform, support freedom of speech and ensure literature reaches as wide and diverse an audience as possible.

Darren Henley, Chief Executive, Arts Council England says:

“This is a fantastic opportunity to showcase England’s amazing literary prowess on the international stage. We’re very pleased to have Norwich and Nottingham jointly hosting this gathering, putting them at the forefront of global literary activity.”

Norwich was England’s first UNESCO City of Literature and is home to the National Centre for Writing. The UNESCO Cities of Literature Forum 2019 in Norwich and Nottingham is supported by funding from Arts Council England.

### **Notes to editors**

Norwich agenda highlights are set to include:

- Delegates visit to Norwich Millennium Library to present a collection of children’s picture books from all over the world.
- Specially commissioned animation on the walls of Norwich castle produced by Evie Clark, Communications Design student from Norwich University of the Arts.
- Visit the University of East Anglia (home to the country’s oldest Creative Writing MA)
- Dragon Hall Literary salon. The spectacular 15<sup>th</sup> century Dragon Hall is home to the National Centre for Writing. The salon will also mark the launch of a new collection of literary walks around Norwich – featuring new commissions by writers who live or have strong connections to the city including **Sarah Hall, Jon McGregor and Emma Healey**.
- Delegates attend Norwich Playhouse for an evening with National Centre for Writing Patron **Ali Smith**
- Walking tour of Norwich – including a look at the Talking Statues project. Launched in September 2018, the project brings to life some of the city’s most iconic statues to ‘talk’ to passers-by. Their words have been written and voiced by the likes of **Stephen Fry, Sarah Perry and Olivia Colman**

Nottingham highlights are set to include:

- The annual UNESCO Lecture with **Robert Macfarlane**. The aim of the lecture series is to explore how literature speaks to one or more of UNESCO’s goals, and Robert’s lecture will be a powerful testimony to the ways in which writing shapes, reflects and creates our understanding of the natural world.
- Delegates attend the Nottingham Marketplace exploring literacy projects including Read On Nottingham, Storysmash and Nottingham Does Comics.
- A conversation about comic strips and illustrated prose with **Audrey Niffenegger and Eddie Campbell**.
- Walking tour of Nottingham – including visits to award-winning Five Leaves Bookshop and the Women’s Library and Lord Byron’s ancestral home, Newstead Abbey

- Delegates attend a new exhibition at Lakeside Arts: *Romantic Facts and Fantasies* explores sixty years of turbulence and innovation that laid the foundations of our modern world. Exhibits on display include images, documents and artefacts chronicling the landscape of the Romantic East Midlands.
- Delegates attend the Nottwich farewell dinner at Wollaton Hall – a spectacular Elizabethan mansion and deer park in the suburbs of Nottingham.

#### **About National Centre for Writing (NCW)**

NCW is a literature development organisation based in Norwich, England's first UNESCO City of Literature. The National Centre for Writing at Dragon Hall promotes great literature, inspires communities through the power of writing, reading and literary translation, nurtures literary talent and hosts world-class events. [www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk](http://www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk)

The patrons of the National Centre for Writing are Margaret Atwood, John Boyne, JM Coetzee, Anthony Horowitz OBE, Jon McGregor, Kei Miller, Sarah Perry, Elif Shafak, Ali Smith CBE, Rose Tremain CBE

#### **About Nottingham City of Literature**

Nottingham was awarded the permanent UNESCO City of Literature designation in December 2015. The city's mission is *building a better world with words*. We do this by promoting literacy and the best new writing talent, growing new audiences for reading, and developing Nottingham as a creative city of international exchange and collaboration. Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature is an educational charity and is supported and funded by Arts Council England, Nottingham City Council, Nottingham Trent University and University of Nottingham and. Our patrons include Panya Banjoko, Henry Normal and Alison Moore.

#### **About UNESCO Cities of Literature**

Worldwide the UNESCO Cities of Literature are: Baghdad (Iraq), Barcelona (Spain), Bucheon (South Korea), Dublin (Ireland), Dunedin (New Zealand), Durban (South Africa), Edinburgh (Scotland), Granada (Spain), Heidelberg (Germany), Iowa City, Iowa (United States), Kraków (Poland), Lillehammer (Norway), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Lviv (Ukraine), Manchester (England), Melbourne, Victoria (Australia), Milan (Italy), Montevideo (Uruguay), Norwich (England), Nottingham (England), Óbidos (Portugal), Prague (Czech Republic), Québec City (Canada), Reykjavík (Iceland), Seattle (United States), Tartu (Estonia), Ulyanovsk (Russia), Utrecht (Netherlands).

**Arts Council England** is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

