



WRITERS'
CENTRE
NORWICH

— National Centre for Writing —

UNESCO City of Literature™

NORWICH TO BE HOME TO A NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING: NEW ANNOUNCEMENT TODAY

7 January 2015

The plan to open a National Centre for Writing in Norwich, England's first UNESCO City of Literature took a major step forward today following an announcement by Arts Council England. Writers' Centre Norwich (WCN), the organisation behind the ambitious project has been successful in the highly competitive funding process and now has access to £900,000 towards the development.

It looks increasingly likely that Norwich will house a new National Centre for Writing based in Dragon Hall, one of the city's most iconic buildings. WCN plans to build a new wing and develop the existing building creating a major new events and education space for the city.

Chris Gribble, Chief Executive of WCN says,:

"The National Centre for Writing will be a really significant achievement for England's first UNESCO City of Literature and something that will place Norwich on the national and international cultural map. The centre will enable young people across the county to benefit from access to wonderful writing and learning experiences, support talented writers and literary translators across East Anglia as well as nationally and be a world class partner to the UEA's Creative Writing programme and an international centre of excellence. With the support of Arts Council England, Norwich City Council, Norfolk County Council, UEA and a range of brilliant Norfolk Trusts and Foundations we are finally close to achieve something very special for Norwich, Norfolk and East Anglia."

Following the funding success WCN has been awarded a grant of £110,566 to support its plans with access to an additional £789, 434 as the project progresses. The total amount would mean WCN had secured 88% of the overall funds necessary to open a National Centre for Writing at Dragon Hall. Over the coming months the organisation will be campaigning on a regional and national scale to secure the remaining funds.

David Gilbert, Chair of WCN says,:

"This is the closest we've come to realising the vision to create something truly game changing for the city, the country and the literature sector. There is still much to do but we've taken a very big step forward and will be doubling our campaigning efforts to make sure we achieve this world-class venue for a world-class literary city".

Gail Harris, Deputy Leader of Norwich City Council, says:

“This is hugely exciting news for both Writers’ Centre Norwich and the city. It will help the centre achieve its long-term vision and give it the national recognition it so richly deserves. Dragon Hall is one of the most historic and atmospheric buildings in the city and it is wonderful to see it being developed in a way that will sustain it into the future.”

Hedley Swain, Area Director, South East, Arts Council England, says:

“Writers’ Centre Norwich is in a really exciting period in its development and the move to Dragon Hall has been a strong catalyst for this. The development plans outlined for Dragon Hall will help its ambitions to be a world class centre for writing – working with writers, readers and translators - and we are delighted to be able to support Writers’ Centre Norwich as it works to make this happen.”

The National Centre is expected to open in early 2018. During this transitional period WCN continues to run a year-round programme of events and writing courses at Dragon Hall including the City of Literature weekend at the Norfolk & Norwich Festival in May, the Worlds Festival in June and Noirwich Crime Writing Festival in September.

All those interested in finding out more about WCN’s plans and interested in supporting the fundraising campaign should see: www.writerscentrenorwich.org.uk

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. For further information, interviews and photographs please contact Alice Kent, Director of Communications, Writers Centre Norwich, alice.kent@writerscentrenorwich.org.uk / 01603 877177

2. **Writers’ Centre Norwich** is the literature development agency for the East and led the successful bid to have Norwich nominated as England’s first UNESCO City of Literature. WCN is a National Portfolio Organisation supporting by Arts Council England. 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.

3. **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 has been leased to Writers’ Centre Norwich.