

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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City of Literature 2020 launches with a series of conversations, reflections and connections across one week in May

The National Centre for Writing (NCW) and Norfolk & Norwich Festival (NNF) are delighted to announce the launch of City of Literature 2020 – a week-long series of digital conversations, reflections and connections that celebrate the importance of writing, reading and making art in difficult times.

The programme, which includes original commissions from local figures at The Book Hive and Jarrold as well as Booker Prize-longlisted writers, provides a snapshot of the physical City of Literature strand of Norfolk & Norwich Festival which was cancelled this year due to Covid19.

Podcasts, tea-time reads and interactive online activities will be released throughout the week of 18 – 24 May on the [National Centre for Writing website](#). All of the materials and activities are free to enjoy and everyone is welcome to take part.

Joe Hedinger is a bookseller for The Book Hive and co-founder of the not-for-profit literature magazine, Dog-Ear. He has written a feature which will be published on Friday 22 May and has also helped to organise a virtual readathon based on The Book Hive's regular 'Page Against the Machine' event:

'We know our customers have been missing our weekly Page Against the Machine events during lockdown, so we're so happy to be partnering with the National Centre for Writing for a big 'remote' version. With lots of people working from home at the moment, it can feel like we're spending even more time, all day every day, staring at a screen. An hour's break with a book could be just the tonic for the eyes, the brain and – dare I say it – the soul. I plan on enjoying a bit of Beryl Bainbridge's *Injury Time* during the hour and can't wait to find out what everyone else will be reading. '

[Page Against the Machine](#) will take place at 3pm on Saturday 23 May. Readers are encouraged to share photos of their chosen books and reading spots on social media using the hashtag #CityofLit20.

The week-long celebration also includes:

- Norfolk-based nature writer and *Guardian* columnist Patrick Barkham on the joys of discovering neighbourhood nature
- A podcast discussion between UEA graduate and debut author Elizabeth Macneal and Goldsmiths Prize-shortlisted writer Sara Baume, reflecting on art, isolation, motivation, nature and beauty
- A guided activity on exploring your own creativity in the darkness, plus a podcast with Booker Prize-longlisted writer Max Porter on his experience of creating art in the dark
- The first NCW Virtual Book Club, discussing Sara Baume's novel *A Line Made By Walking*

Peggy Hughes, Programme Director at the National Centre for Writing, said:

'Every year our festival programme, in partnership with the Norfolk & Norwich Festival, seeks to honour and animate Norwich's status as England's first UNESCO City of Literature. This year global circumstances may have prevented us from celebrating, listening and connecting in leafy Chapelfield Gardens, but there's so much to admire in the work and imaginations of our writers. Now, more than ever, we read to know we are not alone. In the dark days, we create, as our very special 'A Delicate Sight' piece will show. Join us for this extraordinary City of Literature 2020 chapter, a programme of commissioned pieces and podcasts which strikes a match to light a way forward, that brings us together while we must be apart.'

Darren Cross, Head of Communications & Development at Norfolk & Norwich Festival said:

'Debate, discussion and the connections brought about by local and nationally-renowned writers are immensely important right now. City of Literature is one of the staple ingredients in the Festival mix and we're delighted our partnership with National Centre for Writing will see some of that work reaching audiences in Norwich, Norfolk and beyond.'

For more information and to view everything coming up throughout the week, visit nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/city-of-literature.

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1. For comment and photos contact Steph McKenna, Communications Manager at steph@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk / 01603 877177

2. About National Centre for Writing

The **National Centre for Writing** (NCW) is a place of discovery, exchange, ideas and learning for writers, literary translators and readers. Based in the restored and extended 15th-century Dragon Hall in the heart of Norwich England's first UNESCO City of Literature, it explores how writing can inspire and change the world we live in. Its year-round programme of events, festivals and courses reaches over 14,000 people a year with an additional 110,000 engaged online. Through its learning and participation programme it supports 5,000 young people a year and has a commitment to working with those in the most disadvantaged areas. NCW's patrons include Margaret Atwood, JM Coetzee, Kei Miller and Elif Shafak. Its key funders are Arts Council England, Norwich City Council and University of East Anglia.

www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk

3. About Norfolk & Norwich Festival

Norfolk & Norwich Festival shares exceptional arts experiences across East England. We lead and support celebration, creativity and curiosity in our community to make our part of the world a great place to live, work and play. The Festival takes place in Norwich and around Norfolk for 17 days each May. The programme is multi-artform, contemporary, international and audience-centred. The Festival is distinctive because we collaborate with artists – from down the road and around the world – to explore the unique physical and cultural identities of our place and to make art which is meaningful to the lives of our audiences. The organisation has been an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation since April 2012 and is one of 10 Bridge Organisations with a mandate to develop arts and cultural opportunities for children and young people in the East of England. Norfolk & Norwich Festival is funded and supported by Arts Council England, Norwich City Council and the generous support of other sponsors and donors.

www.nnfestival.org.uk