

National Centre for Writing

Activity Report

April — November 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic

Financial/Statistical Summary

2019 — 2020

The Patrons of the National Centre for Writing are:

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John Boyne
J. M. Coetzee
Anthony Horowitz OBE
Jon McGregor
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Introduction

When we sat down in late February, poised to end the first full financial year of our existence as the National Centre for Writing at Dragon Hall, we had no idea what the months ahead held in store for us all.

We were looking back at the audiences we'd welcomed to Dragon Hall and our events around the country and online, at the communities of early career writers and literary translators we'd worked with in so many ways, at the local communities we'd started to get to know and understand, at the young people in and out of school across Norfolk we'd worked with, and at all the partnerships we'd developed to explore the ways in which creative writing and literary translation can make sense of our world and help to make it a better one. And we were thinking about the year ahead, of course.

Like characters at the start of any narrative, we didn't know how things would turn out.

While the current news about vaccines and the amazing efforts of our health and social care workers is cause for hope and celebration, there are still likely to be unexpected twists and turns in the narrative ahead before we return to any sort of normality. It's likely that wherever we return to will be a different place from where we started, and that may not be such a bad thing.

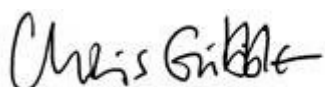
'We have worked incredibly hard to maintain contact with our audiences and communities, to offer them support, resources, opportunities to share their experiences, and spaces just to be in each other's company.'

What we have learned is that staying connected and staying creative – our priority in the months just gone – will guide us over the year to come. We have worked incredibly hard to maintain contact with our audiences and communities, to offer them support, resources, opportunities to share their experiences, and spaces just to be in each other's company. We will continue to do that with a renewed commitment to ensuring access and inclusivity is at the core of our thinking and actions. We will carry on the work to maintain Dragon Hall as a Covid-secure space for when our audiences can return, and in the meanwhile redouble our efforts to make digital spaces creative and welcoming for all those who can join us there.

Dragon Hall has been a place of exchange, conversation, debate, argument and community gathering since 1430. We're absolutely committed to making sure it returns from this short hiatus as a place where those who live in, work in or visit Norwich – physically or virtually, writers, translators, readers and communities of all sorts – can find the inspiration, stories and encouragement they need to face an uncertain world.

Following is a summary of our pandemic year, we hope you enjoy some of the work and stories in it. We're looking forward to meeting you in 2021.

Best wishes,



Chris Gribble
Chief Executive, National Centre for Writing

Stay creative and connected

Between April
and November
2020 NCW has:

Produced
38
episodes of
The Writing Life
podcast which have
been listened to
27,233
times

Welcomed
writers from

22

countries to take part in our
online artistic programme

Welcomed audience
members for
online events from

38

countries
around
the world

SPENT
£89,074.45

on new
commissions
from

writers

Had a combined
total of podcast /
Youtube / web audience of

613,038

Created
13
new free
online courses
for young people

Delivered online
workshops
and courses to

427
people

71
writers

have been paid
for online event
appearances and/or
course tutor fees

Provided intensive
professional
development to

17

early career
writers and
translators

Launched
three new
(free) online
self-study
courses which
2,018
people have
enrolled on

Welcomed
over
600

writers, translators
and readers to
our new Discord
discussion forum

Produced four free
writer resource packs
which have been accessed

28,896
times

Presented
35

free online literature
events which have received
5,993
individual registrations

Worked with
students from

15

schools as part of
the **Lit From the Inside**
programme

Had

320

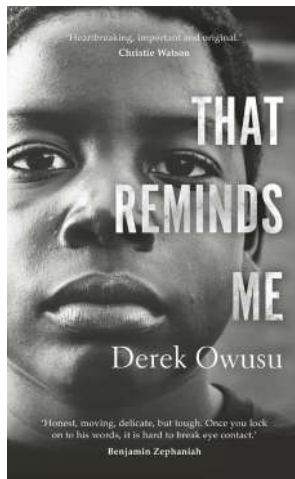
young people take
part in one of the
free online courses

WRITERS, TRANSLATORS & READERS

‘2020 is a year none of us will quickly forget. A year of closed doors, bad news, rising peaks, strange weather, grief. Of being distant from each other but connected like never before. And in these awe-struck days, the strangest of our lives, literature has consoled and comforted, challenged and enlivened, brought hope. It has been our pleasure and privilege to keep our writers and readers connected to each other through the activity you’ll read about here: in commissioning new work, delivering workshops and conversations and podcasts, producing and sending resources into the world for early career writers and schools and young people, and much more.

We enter 2021 with a spirit of optimism and enquiry, eager to open our doors again, and to build on the lessons 2020 has taught us. Miroslav Holub reminds us in his celebrated poem that to open a door is to allow other worlds in, as well as gardens, trees and woods. To imagine that something else and some other place is possible. As 2021 approaches, we look forward to sharing our world ever wider, and inviting new worlds in.’

— Peggy Hughes, Programme Director



Derek Owusu accepts the 2020 Desmond Elliott Prize

Desmond Elliott Prize 2020

In May, Derek Owusu won the 2020 Desmond Elliott Prize for his vivid and extraordinary work *That Reminds Me*. He received a cash prize of £10,000 and a year-round package of support. NCW administered the prize for the first time this year as part of the new Early Career Awards portfolio that included two new prizes for innovation in form and writers overcoming barriers to publication, supported by UEA Creative Writing and the Laura Kinsella Foundation respectively.

‘We can change the narrative, promote real talent, and hope. The achievements of these writers tell us that the future is here, and it is in good hands.’

– Preti Taneja, Chair of the judges announces the shortlist for the Desmond Elliott Prize 2020.

[Read her article in the *Guardian*](#)

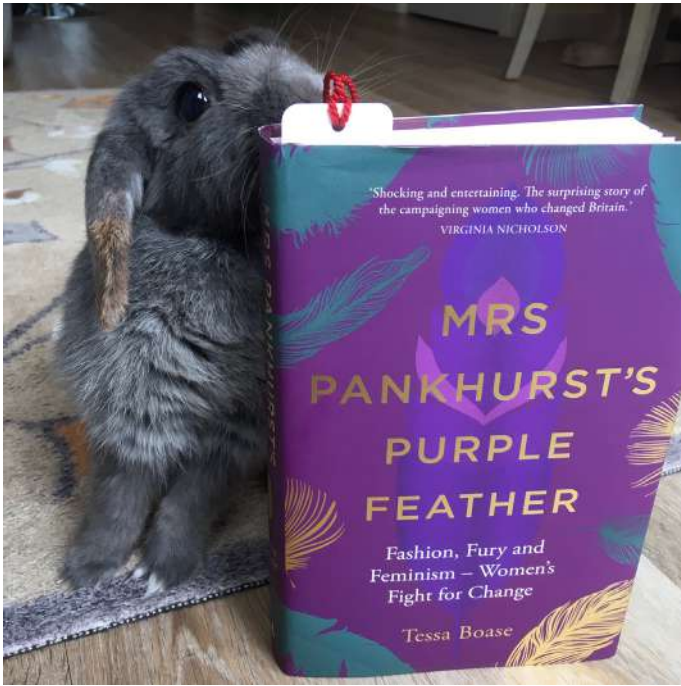
International Literature Showcase

Owen Sheers selected ten inspiring writers asking the questions that will shape the future as part of NCW's ongoing partnership with British Council to promote writers from the UK to new international audiences. Supported by Arts Council England and Creative Scotland.

‘These ten writers create stories and poems which offer us glimpses of how we might reposition ourselves in relation to each other and the natural world; they invite us to imagine other ways to be.’

– Author, poet and playwright Owen Sheers curates the fourth International Literature Showcase. [Read his article in the *Guardian*](#)





Audience images submitted on social media for Page Against the Machine, part of City of Literature 2020

City of Literature 2020

In partnership with Norfolk & Norwich festival, NCW launched a week-long series of digital conversations, reflections and connections to celebrate the importance of writing, reading and making art in difficult times. A highlight included Booker Prize long-listed writer Max Porter in conversation with artist and producer Sam Winston introducing *A Delicate Sight* – a guided creative writing experience. The week culminated with Page Against the Machine, a shared socially distanced readathon across the city.

Jay Bernard and Khairani Barokka announced as new Associate Artists

In August writer and filmmaker Jay Bernard and poet and artist Khairani Barokka were announced as NCW's new Associate Artists. With support from Arts Council England's Ambition for Excellence Fund they will create new projects and work closely with NCW's audiences and communities.

'In this challenging period, when artists' incomes and means of sharing work have been severely impacted by COVID, this support and the safety net that allows artistic risk is more essential than ever.'

– Peggy Hughes, Programme Director on the Associate Artist initiative. Read more in [The Bookseller](#)

Literary translation

The next stage of NCW's partnership programme [Visible Communities](#) got underway with a range of professional development opportunities for UK-based Black and Brown literary translators, and those working from diaspora and heritage languages. In June, over 1,000 people watched David Bellos deliver the 2020 Sebald Lecture – a partnership event led by the British Centre for Literary Translation. In September on the eve of International Translation Day, NCW brought together four literary translators from around the globe – Jen Wei Ting in Singapore, Anton Hur in Korea, Somrita Urni Ganguly in India and Gitanjali Patel in the UK – for an event chaired by Daniel Hahn. ['Who is This Mythical English Reader?'](#) has been watched over 1,100 times. NCW also announced the next cohort for the Emerging Translator Mentorship Scheme. Now in its tenth year it has supported 98 translators in 32 languages.



'I liked how all the panellists came from different countries and backgrounds, allowing many perspectives to be represented on stage. This was a truly excellent event.'

– Jeremy Tiang, novelist, playwright and translator, on the event 'Who is This Mythical English Reader?'

'Through translating novels, I want to give a platform to misunderstood communities to tell their own stories on their own terms.'

– Anam Zafar, Visible Communities, Emerging Translator Mentee 2020/21



2020 cohort of the Escalator Talent Development Programme (c) Hannah Hutchins

Escalator Talent Development Programme

Six more writers graduated from the [Escalator Talent Development Programme](#). The ten-month mentoring programme finished with an online showcase of their work to agents and publishers in November. Applications for the 2020 programme were encouraged from writers who self-identify as being from a working class background, who haven't undertaken any formal creative writing qualifications, or who wouldn't ordinarily have had this kind of opportunity. Funded by Arts Council England with support from The Garrick Charitable Trust.

'The message I want to put out is that being an 'emerging writer' doesn't necessarily mean a 'young writer'.'

– Paul Couch, Escalator Mentee 2020

Provided intensive
professional
development to



early career
writers and
translators

Open Doors

We launched [Open Doors](#) in November – a series of submissions and commissions inviting writers to collaborate and respond to the challenges of our times through new work. This initiative was fuelled by a desire and need to get commissions, work and money out to writers and artists during this tough financial period. Open Doors will explore innovation in the presentation of literature events and reflect on the experience of lockdown. Supported by Arts Council England through the Ambition for Excellence programme.

COMMUNITIES, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Launch of the *Anonymous Memoirs* anthology

In our final event before lockdown we launched *Anonymous Memoirs*, an anthology of new poems by people aiming to live a life free from alcohol and drug misuse. The anthology was the culmination of a six-month partnership project between NCW and The Matthew Project, a charity supporting children and adults across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex with issues around substance misuse and wellbeing. Participants took part in writing workshops led by local writers Lewis Buxton and Margaret Meyer. The programme was funded by Broadland Meridian.

‘In my twenties I was crippled with anxiety. Coming into my forties and now being clean and sober, I’ve recognised the need to step out of my comfort zone. When coming to Dragon Hall to read the poem I didn’t allow it to eat me up like I would have done years ago. It’s the first time I’ve done something like this in 20 years.’

– Mark, *Anonymous Memoirs* programme participant



Untitled

Ashley

One of the most amazing things is life:
the ups and downs the struggles, the strife.
One life starts, another ends
but life carries on, it curves round the bends.
One of the most amazing things is the rain
how it cleans everything, this dust, the pollution,

the air that we breathe, the smog that we see,
the microbes we don't, pulling them down,
Trapped in a boat.

The rain is amazing, keeping me
afloat

As I lay here amazing, in a boat.

– From *Anonymous Memoirs*

Young Norfolk Writing Competition

The [Young Norfolk Writing Competition](#) received a record 500 entries this year. The annual partnership with Young Norfolk Arts, supported by Norfolk County Council gives young people a platform for their work. This year, for the first time, three people – Mathilda Armiger, Kasey Challenger and Ryan Taaffe-Fowle – were all chosen as Young Norfolk Laureates.



‘Growing up I always struggled with English but still enjoyed it, so finding poetry gave me an effective outlet that wasn’t constrained by any set rules. I am very grateful for this opportunity.’

– Ryan Taaffe-Fowle one of the 2020 Young Norfolk Laureates

Book bundles for schools

A new project with the waste management company FCC Environment saw NCW gift books on active citizenship and renewable energy to schools in Norfolk and Suffolk. To celebrate the positive actions of young people during a difficult year, we commissioned a poem by Young Norfolk Laureate Mathilda Armiger to front the campaign.

Time to Write

This year NCW launched [13 free online creative writing courses](#) for young people. Themes included ‘Art in a time of crisis’, lyric writing and ‘How to write weird’. The interactive courses provided creative activity away from formal learning during the long weeks of lockdown.

Lit From the Inside

Eighteen young people from across Norfolk continued to meet throughout the year as the 2020 Lit From the Inside cohort. The ‘Lit Insiders’ share a love of reading, writing and books in their schools and local communities, and help spread the word of Norwich as England’s first UNESCO City of Literature, while gaining valuable experience in the creative industries. Across our Learning & Participation programme we aim to ensure that 50% of participants are from a lower economic background. Supported by Anguish’s Educational Foundation and The Norwich Freeman’s Charity.



NORWICH UNESCO CITY OF LITERATURE

LIVE, WORK & VISIT



Attica Locke delivers the Noirwich Lecture 2020 online

Noirwich Crime Writing Festival

Attica Locke, Oyinkan Braithwaite and Sophie Hannah headlined the seventh Noirwich Crime Writing Festival, an annual partnership with the University of East Anglia. For the first time the entire programme was free and available to watch online. Audiences from France, Japan, Nigeria, Singapore and the United States watched Locke's hard-hitting lecture on 'Power, Privilege and Trump's America'. An exclusive extract was featured in the [Guardian](#).

Collaboration: Place: Change

[Collaboration: Place: Change](#) – the cultural leadership professional development programme for Norfolk and Suffolk, due to take place in the summer of 2020 – was reprofiled and will take place online, starting January 2021. In direct response to the challenges posed by Covid-19, an additional online support programme, CPC+, was set up for 15 senior cultural leaders in the region to share collaborative learning.

The Collaboration: Place: Change programme is managed by NCW on behalf of the New Anglia LEP Culture Board, and delivered in partnership with Clore Leadership, Achates Philanthropy and the University of East Anglia. It is supported by Arts Council England, New Anglia LEP Innovative Projects Fund, Suffolk County Council, Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council and other cultural organisations in Norfolk and Suffolk.

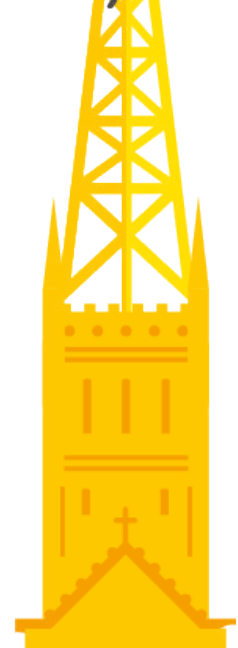
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(c) FCC Environment

For the Bin Crew

Luke Wright

As night clocks off and day clocks in
the rumble of a wheelie bin
reverberates through morning mist
– the sound of dawn’s percussionist.
And there they stride in raver chic
like titans up your sleepy street
submissive lorry by their side
bin crew – say that name with pride.
While I’m still yawning, sore and mardy
bin crews make the tit look tardy.
Grizzled angels of the front
who take the things that we don’t want.
So come now Britain, raise a drink
without them all our homes would stink



'For the Bin Crew'

In May NCW teamed up with FCC Environment, one of the UK's leading recycling and waste management companies, to commission award-winning poet and theatre-maker Luke Wright to write a poem in praise of thousands of people who have continued to collect and manage waste during lockdown – [watch the video here](#). Working with the *Eastern Daily Press*, households across the East of England were encouraged to join in the campaign with a thank you poster.

'I was delighted to write a little ode to our hard-working bin crews. We are completely reliant on key workers to make our society function. Maybe one of the positives from this crisis will be a renewed appreciation of all our key workers.'

– Luke Wright



Welcoming virtual writers in residence

Thomas Heerma van Voss was NCW's first virtual writer in residence. From his home in Amsterdam he joined in the working life of NCW including delivering Zoom workshops for the Lit From the Inside group, meeting local writers and recommending a book list for local independent bookshop, The Book Hive. His writing featured in *Verzet*, the NCW/Strangers Press collaboration of New Dutch Writing. His imagined walk of the city for our Walking Norwich series can be enjoyed [here](#).

Sisters of the Gated City

At the start of the year we partnered with Alumno student resident provider to find a poem to be incorporated into the design of the Benedict's Gate student residence in Norwich. Local poet Jenny Pagdin was chosen to write a poem to feature on 12 panels, each named after one of Norwich's historic city gates. Her incredible poem was unveiled in the city this autumn.



Jenny Pagdin

Living Wage Week

NCW was delighted to support Norwich City Council's Living Wage Week in November. We commissioned a poem by Hannah Levene. She so perfectly hit the brief with her powerful poem that it was selected to front the national Living Wage campaign. Our incredibly talented 2020 Young Norfolk Laureate Ryan Taaffe-Fowle also wrote a brilliant poem to highlight this important campaign which was shared throughout #LivingWageWeek.

Basket of goods

Hannah Levene

there are some jobs
you lose / there are some jobs
you stick at or get or get
stuck to:
1. hours worked valued less than
basket of goods
made up for by
the amount of stationery (stick, stuck)
i have stolen from the stationery cupboard.
i am using fistfuls of mechanical pencils
to represent the deficit
between the minimum
and the living
wage. 2. at tesco i offer to trade
sellotape for
the remainder of my
basket of goods. (no dice) "basket of goods"
doesn't that sound nice? not basic
but
sort of
baked or like a dog bed or a baby's crib or something
full of fruit? employers ask why: 3. the staff
(apple) turn over.
the staff get
stuck but
they don't
stay.
[interview with barista whilst they steam milk:]
A: i have tried to feel grateful for
minimum wage
but i have only ever felt
hungry.
A: i wish i could reconcile how
stuck
i feel (8 coffee shops in 10 years)
with how many jobs i've left. i wish i could reconcile how
stuck
i feel with
how little you expect me to
stay.



4. the Living Wage
takes fistfuls of fresh air on its lunch break.
it puts on its coat and hat and turns the light off leaving the office last
it welcomes living
into what has
only ever felt like
work.

Funders

Thank you to all of our programme funders. The artistic and outreach programmes which are delivered on a local, national and international scale would not be possible without your generous contributions.

[View our funders](#)

OPERATIONS & SUSTAINABILITY

Governance

In April NCW assembled a Board sub-group as an advisory panel during this turbulent period. Working with our Chair Pam Henderson we were able to steer the organisation through tough decisions, numerous funding applications and a period of furlough for three quarters of our staff.

Anti-racism/Black Lives Matter

NCW spent time reflecting on where we must make improvements across our operations, programme and communication functions to proactively approach anti-racism. All staff have completed unconscious bias training. A series of facilitated discussions is planned to further engage our staff, senior management and Board alongside a review of all recruitment practices and programme and audience targets to create an actionable plan to increase our effectiveness.

Weddings & commercial hire

Along with arts venues across the country we had to close our doors in March. NCW was fortunate that much of our programme could be delivered by virtual means. The pandemic however meant we had to put on hold all commercial hires and weddings planned at Dragon Hall. During the brief guideline changes in the summer we were able to host the wonderful, socially distanced wedding of Erik and Liam. Live streaming proceedings to Erik's family in North America was a first. We've invested in making sure Dragon Hall is Covid-secure and compliant with all guidelines. Along with wedding and hire venues across the country we continue to monitor the situation and very much hope to welcome more couples to celebrate their special day with us in 2021.

Environmental sustainability

This year we've worked with Norwich Business Improvement District as one of the SME partners on the Upcycle Your Waste scheme. Norwich is one of only six cities participating in 'Interreg 2 Seas', an EU-funded project to support a less wasteful future. We continue to log, report and monitor our full environmental performance through Julie's Bicycle, allowing us to monitor our environmental impact and wider sustainability plan. Our 2019/2020 submission saw a reduction in overall carbon emissions. We plan for and deliver year-on-year improvements to our environmental performance.

Internships

We were determined to be able to deliver our paid internship opportunities to students from the University of East Anglia even if it would be some time before we could meet in person! We advertised and recruited for two interns to gain experience across our operations, programming and communication functions to get a holistic experience of working in the creative industries. We look forward to working with Molly-Rose and Emily in January 2021.



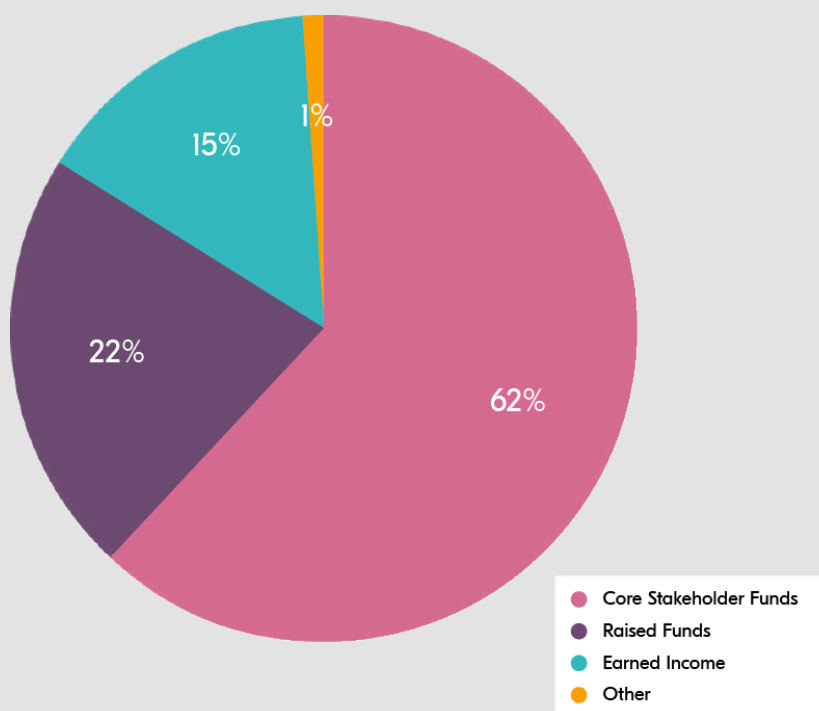
2019/20 SUMMARY

Financial overview

During the year 2019-20 NCW was awarded funding to deliver two large-scale projects: the national Early Career Awards Programme and the East of England focussed, strategic project Collaboration: Place: Change. Our Commercial Activity income increased significantly and we continued to deliver a large scale and diverse programme of work locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

In the year, 62% (44% in 2018-19) of our income came from our Core Stakeholders: Arts Council England, Norwich City Council, Norfolk County Council and the University of East Anglia. 22% (40% in 2018-19) of our income was from Raised Funds and included: Trust and Foundation funding and Partnership income; other Strategic Funds and Foundations; and Partnership Income, in support of our wide ranging programme. Earned Income 15% (12% in 2018-19) is income from: ticket sales; course fees, trading activities and fundraising.

Income



We measure our success through five headline strategic aims:

Aim 1: Art To create opportunities for writers and literary translators and support a diverse and vibrant literary ecology.

Aim 2: Learning To increase the range and depth of opportunities to participate in and benefit from creative writing, reading and literary translation.

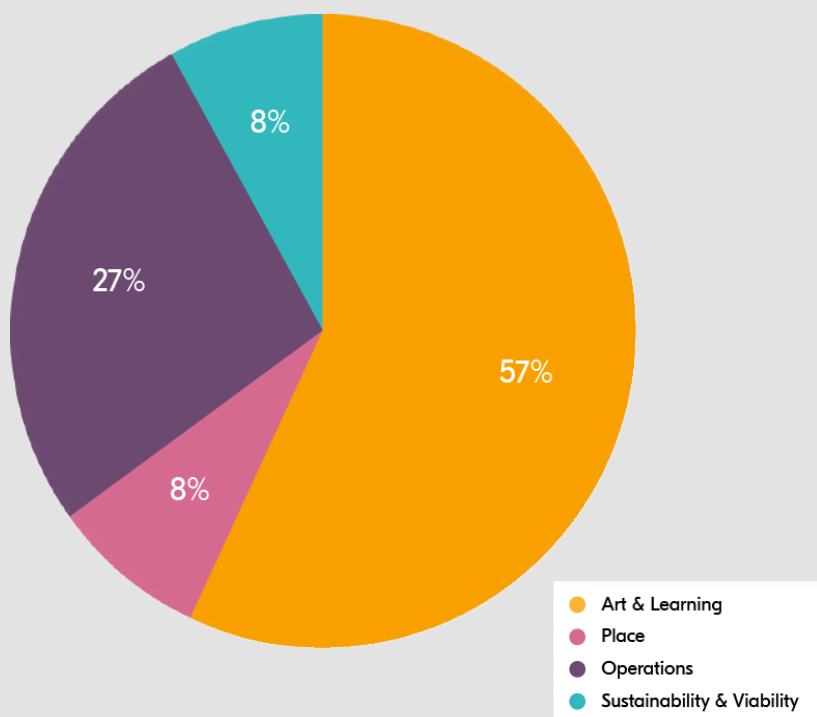
Aim 3: Place To improve the cultural, social and economic ecology of Norwich, UNESCO City of Literature and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership region helping create a more attractive place to live, work and visit.

Aim 4: Operations To improve the viability and long-term sustainability of the organisation.

Aim 5: Sustainability & Viability To be an effective, inclusive, viable and accountable organisation.

57% of our expenditure is connected to Aims 1 (Art) and 2 (Learning) and delivery of our artistic and learning programmes. 8% of expenditure relates to Aim 3 (Place) and the cost of local programmes and initiatives. 27% of our expenditure related to Aim 4 and operational costs in support of all of our programmes. 8% of expenditure relates to Aim 5 (Sustainability & Viability) and are costs incurred in generating earned income.

Expenditure



As a not-for-profit organisation, NCW ensures that its funds are used to fund over 40 varied programmes in support of our charitable purpose.

2019/20

The year in numbers

The statistics below highlight our impact across the year in line with our artistic, community and place programme and our operational and sustainability targets.

NCW spent £40,580 on commissions from 99 writers

96,882 views/downloads/listens for free writer resources

13% of all audience members identify as being disabled

Paid 30 writers to deliver workshops and events with children and young people

Created 40 online learning resources on creative writing including 18 longer form online courses

Offered bursary places for writers from lower income backgrounds on 100% of our in-person writing development workshops

Worked with 83 schools and colleges across the East of England

Delivered free writing sessions to 16 people trying to live a life free from alcohol and drug misuse

Developed partnership agreements with 12 arts, educational or community organisations in the East of England

Delivered 343 formal creative writing learning events for young people and adults

3,206 people took part in one of our creative writing learning opportunities

Worked with 20 young people to help them achieve their 'Discover' ArtsMark qualification

Supported 10 writers from lower-income backgrounds to receive free manuscript assessment via the TLC: ACE Free Reads scheme

Hosted 17 writers in residence in the residency cottage at Dragon Hall

21% of contracted artists were Black or Brown

We commissioned Jackie Kay to choose 10 brilliant BAME UK writers for two showcase events at Cheltenham Literature and Manchester Literary Festival. Her list of writers was promoted through a [Guardian exclusive feature](#)

Held 43 commercial hires and weddings

Successfully fundraised for a new national writing award to support writers who have experienced limiting circumstances or barriers to publication, with the generous support of the Laura Kinsella Foundation

Welcomed six people to our new NCW Supporters' Circle

Funders

Thank you to all our generous funders, we are incredibly grateful for your support, patience and encouragement throughout the past year.

NCW's Founding Partners

Arts Council England
Norwich City Council
University of East Anglia
Norfolk County Council

NCW Supporters' Circle

Briony Bax
The Passingham Family
Martin Pick
Jane and David Steward
Peter Wilson
And those who wish to remain anonymous.

The following organisations supported aspects of our local, regional, national and international programme during 2019/20:

Anguish's Educational Foundation
ANO Institute Moscow, Russia
Arts Council England
Arts Council of Korea
British Council
Bulgarian Embassy
Creative Europe
Creative Scotland
The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust
Francis W Reckitt Arts Trust
Great British Sasakawa Foundation
Icelandic Literature Centre
Italian Cultural Institute
Laura Kinsella Foundation
Leverhulme Trust
Lithuanian Cultural Embassy
LTI Korea

Modern Culture
National Arts Council Singapore
Norfolk County Council
NORLA
Norwegian Embassy
Norwich Business Improvement District
Norwich City Council
PACCAR Foundation
Polish Cultural Institute
Suffolk County Council
Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura - Finnish Literature
Exchange
The Martineau Society
The Norwich Freeman's Charity
University of East Anglia
Virtuago
Visit Norfolk

We would also like to thank everyone who has kindly made donations through our website.

THE NEXT CHAPTER...

Behind the scenes we've been working hard to create a safe, welcoming and Covid-secure environment at Dragon Hall for all communities, audiences and commercial guests to enjoy. We are planning to open the building again as a thriving creative arts venue in 2021 and we continue to monitor government guidelines and advice. An ambitious artistic programme for emerging writers and translators, children and young people and book lovers is in progress. We will innovate as necessary around digital and physical opportunities to create a rich experience for audiences near and far.

New projects for 2021 include:

Future and Form

We look forward to working with the University of East Anglia on Future and Form, part of their 2020-21 celebrations to mark 50 years of the teaching of Creative Writing at UEA. We'll be working with writers Ayòbámi Adébáyò and Jean McNeil to create a dual physical and virtual experience to premiere at Dragon Hall during the City of Literature programme at Norfolk & Norwich Festival in May 2021.

Open Doors

We launched the Open Doors project in November 2020, it will be delivered throughout 2021 with a series of virtual and physical events. As part of Open Doors, NCW will work with Norwich Research Park to pair writers and scientists and present new commissions to support the public understanding of the life sciences, health and medical research. Supported by Arts Council England through the Ambition for Excellence programme.

Tadashi Yanai Initiative for Globalizing Japanese Humanities

We've agreed a three-year partnership with UCLA to develop a new cohort of early career Japanese-English literary translators through an ambitious programme of workshops, mentoring and publication opportunities. The programme will focus on a range of new Japanese voices that are often marginalised, providing an alternative perspective on Japan.

Collaboration: Place: Change

In January a new cohort of 20 developing cultural leaders from across Norfolk and Suffolk will start the ten-month programme. It is designed to equip the next-generation of creative and cultural leaders with the skills they need to drive creative, social and economic change across the region. The programme is managed by the National Centre for Writing on behalf of the New Anglia LEP Culture Board, and delivered in partnership with the Clore Leadership, Achatas Philanthropy and the University of East Anglia. The Programme is supported by Arts Council England, New Anglia LEP Innovative Projects Fund, Suffolk County Council, Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council and other cultural organisations in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Community engagement

We're currently fundraising to enable us to deliver a series of projects around creative writing, well-being and health. We will build on our experience to intensify our work with older people, those in recovery from substance misuse and people from lower socio-economic groups wanting to progress with their writing. We will also have a renewed focus on people living in the four wards immediately surrounding our venue Dragon Hall.

The National Centre for Writing is a shared journey involving friends and colleagues locally, nationally and internationally. We couldn't deliver a programme of such scale and ambition without a huge network of supporters, funders and well-wishers.

We'd like to end on a poem written by Mathilda Armiger, one of the 2020 Young Norfolk Laureates, in which she marks a turbulent year and invites us all to look to the future.

Incantation for a Garden

Mathilda Armiger

Save the eggshells and grinds and
teabags with traces of plastics and
papers with headlines you want to
be eaten, pile them up, in your school
bag, in the corner of your week, take
the shallow days, cradle the heat in
March like the heart of a compost
heap, take a bowl and fill it with
fear and scars where trees used
to be and go out at midnight onto the
roof or the middle of the street and
hold yourself up in the moon's beams,
pocket the smell of wet pavements every
time it rains, fold the light between two buildings
into the shape of a seed, learn the name of
all the weeds, and all the words, and the web of
streets, find a plastic bottle that wanted to
be a sardine, bring it home, celebrate
every birthday, fill a pan with rage, then
make a cake, see the sky explode, have
we watched it burn every day? have we
cried? has the compost crept

into every seam of every life, and have the
flies started whispering the rolling news, are
you waiting? good. fill a pot, or a mug, or two
empty palms with the sound of dogs barking
at night, the taste of the sun
through the window

break the cake you made in two, share it, find
a card with your name on it, and listen, in the
chest of it all, this hard and tangled life, you
will plant a little piece of paper
(you will know what to write)





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