

HIGH STREET TALES: OPEN CALL

Wanted: Writer for a story commission in North Shields

We're looking for a socially engaged writer, experienced at working with local communities and arts and culture organisations, to write a short story as part of a nationwide project to celebrate the future of the local high street.

The project

High Street Tales is part of the cultural programme of the High Street Heritage Action Zones (HAZ) project run by Historic England. Its aim is to create a set of stories to be broadcast and distributed online that celebrate the local high street, the people and communities who depend on them and centre their lives around theirs, and the roles they have played – and will continue to play – in our lives.

Who we are

New Writing North is one of seven writer development agencies working across England with a shared commitment to supporting the artistic and professional development of writers and promoting a greater diversity of voices in the many worlds of writing and reading.

We are working together as part of the HAZ project to create stories from seven towns and cities across England exploring the communities who live there and the role that their high street plays for them. Each of us is commissioning one writer to create a story from one town.

New Writing North is looking to recruit a writer to create a story about **North Shields** and we're seeking, therefore a writer who either lives there, is from there or who has a connection to the town that would inform and make richer this commission. To work within the restrictions of the pandemic we are also minded that the chosen writer should live in easy reach of North Shields.

What is the commission?

England's high streets have a long history and have always been at the heart of our communities. They are our landmarks and points of reference; our meeting places and marketplaces. Across the centuries people have gathered together on high streets, from market days to turning on the Christmas lights; coffee dates to national jubilees. In a recent survey, 45% of respondents indicated that their primary high street use was non-retail related.

Every high street in England, whether it is in a medieval market town or a post-war city centre, has a unique and distinctive history that creates identity and a sense of place. Despite this, high streets are struggling, and need to adapt to survive. Your commissioned story would be a way to help people reconnect with their high streets, helping them see it as a place that can thrive and be of relevance to them and their lives.

The full set of High Street Tales will capture the everyday magic that plays out on high streets across England. We are looking to work with a writer committed to co-creation and uncovering untold stories, who will create an inspiring, thought provoking and entertaining story from their research, consultation and documentation.

About the story and its creation

(1)

Your short story will be **3,000 words or the equivalent of 15 minutes' listening time**. It will be aimed at a confident, engaged readers who are keen to dig beneath the surface of places, learn more about history and heritage and expand their understanding of places, communities, cultures and contexts. We can share more information about the audience with the successful applicant.

As well as the story itself, we would like you to work with us to provide six high quality images relating to the story and its genesis (pictures of locations, people, experiences, contemporary or historical documents) that will form part of the story's context when it's published and shared. We will provide access to a photographer to help with this if needed.

The creation of each of the stories will feature as the central element of a podcast, so we'd like you to take part in that recording too. A 45 minute radio programme will be made about the collective endeavour too.

Finally, each story will be featured in an eBook (not for sale) to be feature on the website of Historic England and the partners of this project.

(2)

As part of your application, we'd like to hear about how you would go about creating your story and there's more information about that below.

The current COVID-19 pandemic is making community engagement and face-to-face working complex. However, we'd like to hear about the ways you feel you could safely engage the community/communities of North Shields in your approach to writing the story. This might include setting up virtual meetings with community groups that New Writing North can help you access. It might include (COVID-19 secure) research visits to North Shields and the places or communities you are planning to write about. It will include **two (virtual) creative writing workshops** that New Writing North can help you set up and manage during the early part of the commission period.

We'd love you to be as creative as possible about the creation and development of the story and we will work with you to develop a risk assessment of any work undertaken and to create a plan to ensure your safety and the safety of any community members you work with.

What we can offer in return

Fee: the fee for the development of the story - to include delivery of two workshops, research, documentation is **£3,000**

New Writing North will pay for the hosting of the workshops and their management, any photography needed, the creation of the podcast and the production of the e-book text.

There are additional funds available to support access needs. There will be space to tell us about these in the application form.

Timeline

It's tight!

Application portal opens: **Thursday 15 October 2020**

Deadline for submission of applications: **Monday 2 November 2020 by 9am**

Notification of outcome: **Monday 9 November 2020**

A first draft of the story must be ready for sharing with New Writing North on **14 December 2020**.

A final version of the story must be agreed by **21 December 2020**.

Work from across the project will be celebrated as part of National Storytelling Week on the **25 January 2021**.

How to Apply

In addition to the usual details and data monitoring we're required to request; we'd like you to provide the following information in support of your application.

1. Tell us about your idea? What's the approach you'd like to take to this commission? What aspect of the high street and its community in North Shields intrigues you? Which stories do you suspect people would like to know more about? Which voices have not been heard? Which buildings and shops open up access to North Shields rich past or show how it might thrive in the future? Tell us about your creative approach in no more than 400 words.
2. Share with us an outline of your approach to the commission detailing your proposed methods for engagement with the place, communities and high street in North Shields. We understand things are complicated at the moment and might get more so, so demonstrate your experience and ingenuity and describe how you'd go about the commission in a safe way and how and to whom you'd like to pitch the two virtual workshops that we'll help you host to engage people and communities from North Shields.
3. Share with us a summary creative CV outlining the creative and community work you've done that is relevant to this commission.

All applications must be submitted via our Submittable page (see website). We will not accept any applications submitted through other sources or which arrive past the stated deadline.

Questions?

For an informal discussion about High Street Tales, please in the first instance contact office@newwritingnorth.com

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